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“It Is True in More Senses Than One, That Slavery Rests upon Hell!” Embodiment, Experience, and Evil in African American Discussions of Slavery and Slaveholders

Edward J. Blum / San Diego State University

Henry Brown knew what it meant to have lived in darkness and then seen a great light. A slave in Virginia for thirty-three years, in 1849 he hatched one of the most creative escape plans in American history. He contorted his body into a wooden box three feet long and two feet wide and had a friend mail him the 250 miles from Richmond, Virginia, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. With freedom, Brown got a new middle name, “Box,” and became a celebrity on the abolitionist lecture circuit, often recreating on stage his entombment in the box and “resurrection” from it. With the help of white abolitionist Charles Stearns, Brown decided to further his fame and push the antislavery cause with a published narrative of his life and escape. As Frederick Douglass and other former slaves were proving in the middle of the 1840s, readers in the North and across the Atlantic in Great Britain devoured tales about slavery from those who had experienced it.¹

Brown attacked slavery in the very first paragraph of his narrative. The language he selected was of hell, the devil, and the demonic. For thirty-three years, slavery had “entwined its snaky folds about my soul.” Life in the South was a sonic, psychic, and physical horror. “Daily and nightly,” he encountered the “frightful presence” of masters and “the fearful sound of their ter-

¹ For more on Brown, see Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 66–130; Jeffrey Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown* (Richmond: Library of Virginia, 2003). For more on slave narratives, see William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760–1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Elizabeth B. Clark, “‘The Sacred Rights of the Weak’: Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America,” *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (1995): 463–93.

rific instruments of torture." To truly understand what he went through, one would have to plumb the "dark and noisome caverns of the hell of slavery."²

After describing slavery and the slave experience as a physical and spiritual encounter with hell, Brown then disclosed his "opinion of the slaveholding religion." Once again he invoked the rhetoric of hell: "I believe in hell, where the wicked will forever dwell, and knowing the character of slaveholders and slavery, it is my settled belief, as it was while I was a slave, even though I was treated kindly, that *every* slaveholder will infallibly go to that hell, unless he repents." For Brown, hell functioned on multiple levels. It was a metaphor to describe the sights, sounds, and physical tortures of slavery; it was also a theological necessity. It was a permanent location of justice and a state of being where slaveholders would suffer. Brown concluded, "It is true in more senses than one, that slavery rests upon hell!"³

As Brown referenced hell, devils, and the demonic, and as he focused on sights, sounds, and physical feelings, he not only discussed slavery in a way that broadens scholarly discussions of religion in nineteenth-century America but also bordered on an approach to religion that highlighted its mutability as a concept and its contested meaning when applied to social problems. Some formerly enslaved people challenged more than the biblical interpretations of slaveholders. They came close to disputing slaveholders' very definitions of religion, or at least of what was considered true or authentic religion. As scholars Jonathan Z. Smith, James Turner, and many others have shown, definitions of "religion" and of what has been considered genuinely "religious" shift over time and often emerge from cross-cultural interactions and struggles. In a brilliant case study of these points, Tisa Wenger examined the 1920s debate over whether Pueblo Sun Dances should be considered part of a religion and how social and legal determinations of what constitutes religion were laden with conflict and contestation.⁴

Narratives from those like Henry Box Brown engaged in disputes over the meanings of religion and religions in part by drawing attention to the nexus of lived experience and imagined concepts of the sacred. To fully understand how African Americans once held in slavery challenged and redefined

² Charles Stearns, *Narrative of Henry Box Brown, Who Escaped from Slavery in a Box 3 Feet Long and 2 Wide* (Boston: Brown & Stearns, 1849), 11; see also Henry Box Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown* (Manchester: Lee & Glynn, 1851). While this essay focuses upon former slaves, I have used some narratives that African Americans wrote for themselves and some that were dictated to white writers. When it came to the language of evil, the similarities were overwhelming and consistent.

³ Stearns, *Narrative of Henry Box Brown*, 18–19, 47.

⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–84; James Turner, *Religion Enters the Academy: The Origins of the Scholarly Study of Religion in America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Tisa Wenger, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

notions of authentic Christianity and religion, one must move beyond an approach to religion that focuses purely on the interiority of mind, intellect, soul, and belief.⁵

These nineteenth-century African Americans described slavery as a hellish experience that was embodied and enacted. What they saw, what they heard, what they felt physically, and how they and others behaved mattered as much as what anyone thought or believed. This essay brings the insights of scholars Mark M. Smith and Anthony Pinn on the importance of senses and bodies to the study of nineteenth-century discussions of religion and slavery. As Smith, Pinn, and others have discussed, individuals should be understood in history as embodied figures whose senses and sensory powers influenced and were influenced by what they thought. To study religion robustly, Pinn maintains, scholars must account for the “material, fleshy reality” of human existence. When formerly enslaved African Americans used the language of hell and emphasized sight, sound, and bodies to describe enslavement, they brought the materially embodied to the spiritual, and vice versa. They refused to consider religion purely an intellectual category of belief. Rather, many espoused a conception of religion and religions that focused on action and privileged physical senses of sight, sound, feeling, and touch.⁶

By looking closely at deployments of hell, invocations of physical senses of touch, sound, and sights, and challenges to definitions of what constituted genuine religion, this essay joins and expands recent work on the role of evil in nineteenth-century America. Literary scholar Yolanda Pierce, for instance, examined five slave narratives from the early nineteenth century and suggested that hell was an important way slaves restored and oriented “their own humanity and the humanity of their brothers and sisters in bondage.” Kathryn Gin Lum uncovered how from the American Revolution to the end of the Civil War, the “politics of damnation” were deployed from Americans high and low, white, black, and Native American, and from all political and theological stripes. Damning others, she concluded, was critical to creating a sense of one’s own group. Much more expansively than Gin or Pierce, W. Scott Poole used the theories of cultural anthropologist René Girard on

⁵ Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin: The Fight against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007).

⁶ Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Anthony B. Pinn, *Embodiment and the New Shape of Black Theological Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 11; Martin Jay, Sophia Rosenfield, Mark S. R. Jenner, Jessica Riskin, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, and Elizabeth D. Harvey, “AHR Forum: The Senses in History,” *American Historical Review* 116, no. 2 (2011): 307–400. See also David Chidester, *Word and Light: Seeing, Hearing, and Religious Discourse* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

scapegoating to explore how a wide swath of Americans demonized one another from the colonial period to the early twenty-first century.⁷

When Henry Box Brown drew on the language of hell to explain slavery and his feelings toward Southern religion, he joined a broad debate over the relationship between religion and slavery. He also used a new rhetoric that was becoming common in former slaves' written narratives and subsequent recollections. The vast literature on the antebellum South, as varied and contentious as it has been, has shown that religion was a key point of contact and conflict.⁸ The same was true for concepts of evil. Whites and blacks often shared basic approaches to hell and the devil, emphasizing concepts from the Bible and European Christianity that highlighted Satan as a deceiver and tempter as well as hell as a place of tormenting fire for the unsaved. But there were differences too. While some African Americans incorporated themes from their West African backgrounds, such as an emphasis on conjure, they rarely invoked explicit links to European writers like John Milton or Dante Alighieri, which was common among white writers. In these ways, a main contribution of these African American writers was to make another way for biblical idioms to work against racial hierarchies.⁹

⁷ Yolanda Pierce, *Hell without Fires: Slavery, Christianity, and the Antebellum Spiritual Narrative* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 129; W. Scott Poole, *Satan in America: The Devil We Know* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009); Kathryn Gin Lum, *Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Jennifer Hildebrand, "'Dere Were No Place in Heaven for Him, an' He Were Not Desired in Hell': Igbo Cultural Beliefs in African American Folk Expressions," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (2006): 127–52.

⁸ See Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Katherine Clay Bassard, *Spiritual Interrogations: Culture, Gender, and Community in Early African American Women's Writing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjure Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Anthony B. Pinn, *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Charles F. Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity: White and Black Evangelicals in Colonial and Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Jason R. Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007); Paul Harvey, *Through the Storm, through the Night: A History of African American Christianity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011); Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Laurie Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African-American Race Histories* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2010).

⁹ For more on Christian and European approaches to the devil and hell, see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995); Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil: From the Middle Ages to the Pres-*

Enslaved people and masters certainly shared much in their religious expressions from songs to scriptures. But when some African American writers and activists from the middle of the nineteenth century explained and attacked slavery, many increasingly used the language of hell, devils, and the demonic as a reference, metaphor, theological emphasis, and political point to explain their experiences, challenge the religion of slaveholders and white supremacy, and carve a moral place for themselves in a nation that questioned not just their citizenship but also their humanity. Although rarely found in published works from black Americans in the eighteenth century, it increasingly became a part of how African Americans collectively registered their complaints against enslavement.¹⁰ Hell, the devil, and the demonic allowed some African Americans to contest the religion of slaveholders and to lean on concepts of religion that moved beyond ideas and sacred texts and into realms of actions, sights, sounds, places, and bodies.

“THE ATMOSPHERE OF HELL”: SLAVERY AND VIOLENCE AS HELL

Before the nineteenth century, it was rare for writers of the black Atlantic to invoke notions of supernatural evil. Some of the first narrators of their slave experiences, such as Briton Hammon, Phillis Wheatley, and Olaudah Equiano, mentioned hell and the devil, but rarely in direct opposition to slaveholders. Briton Hammon discussed Native Americans “shouting and hallowing like so many Devils” but never referenced his owners as demonic.¹¹ Poet Phillis Wheatley, likewise, did not denounce slavery as hell or slaveholders as demonic. She disputed the notion held by some whites that black “color is a diabolic dye,” but she nonetheless wrote that “twas mercy brought me from my pagan land” of Africa.¹² Olaudah Equiano described in the eighteenth century how he came to fear hell. After his conversion to Christianity, however, he felt “the burden of sin” lifted from him and “the gaping jaws of hell” no longer terrifying. Equiano did not refer to slaveholders as “devils,” although he did mention that when first captured he feared that the “white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose

ent, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Polity, 2003); D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan: How Christians Demonized Jews, Pagans, and Heretics* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

¹⁰ For more on African American collective expressions, see Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past*.

¹¹ A *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man* (Boston: Green & Russell, 1760), 6. For more on Hammon’s narrative, see J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), chap. 6.

¹² William H. Robinson, ed., *Phillis Wheatley and Her Writings* (New York: Garland, 1984), 160. For more on Wheatley and writers like her using biblical tropes, see Joanna Brooks, *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

hair” would eat him. Sights, sounds, and feelings were part of these descriptions, but they did not link hell or devils to enslavement.¹³

Although these early black writers did not deploy the language of supernatural evil against their oppression, there were traditions of identifying colonialism and enslavement in the Americas with the demonic. In *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1542), a work known to many American writers in the early nineteenth century, Bartolomé de Las Casas explicitly invoked the demonic. Some English translations subtitled the book “a Faithful Narrative of the Horrid and Unexampled Massacres, Butcheries, and all Manner of Cruelties, that Hell and Malice Could Invent.” In the text, Las Casas penned that “some wicked Devil” possessed “the minds of the *Spaniards*” and led them to “such Inhumanities and Barbarisms” that “no Age can parallel.”¹⁴ Alternatively, the British had a long history of associating “black skin” with “black souls” and rendering the machinations of evil with blackness, Africans, and Native Americans.¹⁵

For British colonists and their American children who opposed slavery throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, it was rare for them to describe enslavement as hellish and slaveholders as tools of the devil. Samuel Sewall, for instance, in *The Selling of Joseph* (1700) believed that all should have liberty and that “all Men, as they are the Sons of Adam . . . have equal Right unto Liberty” but did not attack the institution as Las Casas had Spanish colonialism.¹⁶

The written and published record of antislavery advocates indicates an upsurge of references to the demonic and hellish during the nineteenth century. There were good reasons for this. There was a significant rise in the number of churchgoing, Bible-reading (or Bible-listening) African Americans and an increase in Christian preaching to slaves. What scholars call the “second great awakening” led to robust cultures of African American Christianities. Many of these African American Christians, especially in the South, participated with whites in churches.¹⁷

¹³ *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself*, Vol. 2 (London, 1789), 148; *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself*, Vol. 1 (London, 1789), 72. For more on West African approaches to religion and evil, see William D. Piersen, “White Cannibals, Black Martyrs: Fear, Depression, and Religious Faith as Causes of Suicide among New Slaves,” *Journal of Negro History* 62, no. 2 (1977): 147–59.

¹⁴ Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (New York: Echo Library, 2007), 20.

¹⁵ Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 24, 39n, 256–58; Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil’s Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 136, 148.

¹⁶ See the essays in Mason Lowance, ed., *Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), particularly in the section “The Historical Background for Antebellum Abolitionism, 1700–1830.”

¹⁷ See John B. Boles, *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740–1870* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988); Irons, *Origins of Proslavery Christianity*; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, chaps. 4 and 5.

A small group, however, achieved freedom, formed communities in the North, and joined the growing realm of public publishing for reading publics. They encouraged and joined the social reform movements that had drawn inspiration and energy from the second great awakening. As Gin Lum has shown, these movements drew upon the power of the second great awakening and especially its emphasis on the language of hell and damnation. Social reformers applied the polarizing language of heaven and hell to issues of alcohol use, prison life, prostitution, and slavery. With improvements in book publishing and the wider dissemination of written texts, African Americans increasingly turned to literature to make their points. These distinct features of the early and mid-nineteenth century created the framework and atmosphere for African American writers and speakers to address their lives and times.¹⁸

When more and more formerly enslaved individuals like Henry Box Brown started writing of their experiences in the middle of the nineteenth century, they borrowed from, participated in, and transformed widespread appeals to demons and devils that were animating American society. The devil ran rampant in the rhetoric of antebellum America. Temperance advocates attacked “demon rum,” while Protestants assailed new spiritualists as deluded by “Satan.” Proslavery writers accused abolitionists of having “tongues set on fire of hell,” while immediate abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison called the Constitution an “agreement with hell.” “My singularity,” this white New Englander with African American compatriots wrote, “is that when I say that Freedom is of God, and Slavery is of the devil, I mean just what I say.”¹⁹ By the 1850s, in fact, the most popular exhibit at Peale’s Museum in New York was a tour of the “Infernal Regions,” where Beelzebub and Lucifer guided the tour through hell.²⁰

It was common to represent evil incarnate as dark in skin tone, but there were other physical markers of evil beyond color or race. One white minister

¹⁸ John Ernest, *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History, 1794–1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Maffly-Kipp, *Setting Down the Sacred Past*; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Gin Lum, *Damned Nation*, 43–86.

¹⁹ William Lloyd Garrison, “No Compromise with Slavery” (1854), in Lowance, *Against Slavery*, 127; Poole, *Satan in America*, 68; For a discussion of how whites and blacks shared this kind of discourse in the South, see Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997), chap. 1; Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995), 96–96. For more on religion and abolitionism, see Mitchell Snay, *Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, eds., *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); John R. McKivigan, *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830–1865* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

²⁰ Lewis O. Saum, *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1980), 35.

of the era wrote, "It is common to represent Satan as *black*, and the place of his abode as the 'blackness of darkness for ever.'"²¹ Others identified the devil as red like fire. When putting Satan and demons into physical or visual form, Americans of the mid-nineteenth century often drew upon medieval European models where evil beings had horns, tails, hooves, and an extended nose (which seemed an obvious form of anti-Semitism). Evil incarnate was a mix of racial others and animality.²²

Many African American writers described encounters with hell, devils, and demons in a wide variety of ways, and these held a variety of meanings throughout the nineteenth century. Some, like former slave and itinerant preacher Jarena Lee, considered the devil a tangible spiritual presence that could take physical shape and wield emotional power. In her narrative, she recalled seeing the devil "in the form of a dog." Satan hounded her and tried to convince her to commit suicide. Only through belief in Christ and a dedication to preaching was Lee free from the devil's assaults.²³ For others, hell was the terrifying place one would go after death if one was not saved through faith in Jesus. Noah Davis, who admitted in his narrative to only attending church as a young man because that was where the girls were, came to fear that since he "had sinned against his holy laws," God would "send me to hell."²⁴ In some slave songs, African Americans joined biblical concepts with traditions from West African and Caribbean roots when they pictured the devil as a trickster figure who could con the unconverted to hell. "De debbil am a liah an' a conjurer too," one spiritual went, "Ef you doan look out, he'll conjure you."²⁵

In the antebellum South, white masters and their supporters attempted to use hell as a scare tactic to compel enslaved peoples to be obedient to their masters and to the social system. It was another piece of the indoctrination attempt to convince slaves that compliance was best for them here and in the

²¹ Hollis Read, *The God of This World; The Footprints of Satan; or, The Devil in History* (Toronto: Maclear, 1875), 29.

²² The racialization of evil, especially in this context, needs far greater analysis. For some beginnings, see Stefan M. Wheelock, *Barbaric Culture and Black Critique: Black Antislavery Writers, Religion, and the Slaveholding Atlantic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016); Edward J. Blum, "The First Secessionist Was Satan": Secession and the Religious Politics of Evil in Civil War America," *Civil War History* 60, no. 3 (2014): 234–69; for more on the racialization of evil and its connection to the racialization of God and Jesus, see Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

²³ Jarena Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee* (Philadelphia: Printed and Published for the Author, 1849), 4, 6.

²⁴ Noah Davis, *A Narrative of the Life of Rev. Noah Davis, A Colored Man* (Baltimore: John F. Weishampel, 1859), 21.

²⁵ Quoted in Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 218. See also Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 57. For more on the conjure tradition, see Yvonne P. Chireau, *Black Magic: Religion and the African American Conjuring Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

hereafter. Charles Colcock Jones, a white planter and minister who spent much of his career trying to persuade slaveholders to take the souls of their slaves seriously, invoked hell and the devil on several occasions in his popular catechism for the instruction of slaves. Satan was the chief “liar” who encouraged others to deceive, and hell was “a fearful thing” and a “consuming fire.”²⁶ Another white Southern minister cautioned slaves who pined for liberty, “It is the devil who tells you to try and be free.”²⁷ As Henry Bibb recalled, proslavery ministers taught him and other slaves that “servants shall be obedient to your masters.” This meant “that God will send them to hell, if they disobey.”²⁸ Harriet Jacobs, whose freedom narrative told of sexual exploitation and masculine anxiety over how much women could be controlled, described how during an interrogation about who was the father of her child, a white doctor told her, “If you deceive me, you shall feel the fires of hell.”²⁹ William Wells Brown remembered a preacher who gave a vivid description of hell and then explained that slaves would go there “if you don’t be good and faithful servants.”³⁰

Threats of hell could even be used across denomination lines between masters and enslaved peoples. One Protestant African American in New Orleans recounted the time when her mother died. Only fourteen, young Sallie cried and cried until her overseer “got mad” and “told me to hush crying, and said, ‘Your mother is dead and in hell.’” Sallie recalled that he “was a Catholic, and hated my mother’s sort of religion.” His harsh words led Sallie to weep even more. The overseer then changed tactics: “he beat me and kicked me all ’round in the field.”³¹

Some African Americans who had achieved their freedom described how their enslavement, the violence inflicted upon them and those around them, and the neglect of education led to convoluted and confused religious beliefs. “Those were my days of ignorance,” one freedperson explained in 1873.³² John Jea, who lived as a slave in New York and in freedom

²⁶ Charles C. Jones, *A Catechism, of Scripture Doctrine and Practice, for Families and Sabbath Schools Designed also for the Oral Instruction of Colored Persons* (Savannah, GA: John M. Cooper, 1837), 94; for more on Jones, see Eiskine Clarke, *Dwelling Place: A Plantation Epic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

²⁷ Quoted in Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 44.

²⁸ Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (New York: Published by the Author, 1849), 24.

²⁹ Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston: Published for the Author, 1861), 90.

³⁰ William Wells Brown, *My Southern Home; or, The South and Its People* (Boston: A. G. Brown, 1880), 17.

³¹ Octavia V. Rogers Albert, *The House of Bondage, or, Charlotte Brooks and Other Slaves, Original and Life Like, As They Appeared in Their Old Plantation and City Slave Life; Together with Pen-Pictures of the Peculiar Institution, with Sights and Insights into Their New Relations as Freedmen, Freemen, and Citizens* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1890), 87.

³² Henry Bleby, *Josiah: The Maimed Fugitive. A True Tale* (London: Wesleyan Conference Center, 1873), 61.

became a preacher who traveled throughout the Americas and Europe, disdained Southern whites for failing to teach slaves the Christian faith. In his 1811 autobiography, he explained, "We were often led away with the idea that our masters were our gods." He was instructed that slaves were not humans, but devils. They invoked the conflation of black skin with a black soul. "Frequently did they tell us we were made by, and like the devil, and commonly called us *black devils*."³³ Henry Box Brown described how when he was a child his mother taught him the "principles of morality," but he was nonetheless "deplorably ignorant on religious subjects." He came to believe that his master was "God" and that the master's son was "Jesus."³⁴ Samuel Northrop despaired, "I am lost—lost!" Even though he prayed to heaven, he heard "no answering voice—no sweet, low tone, coming down from on high." Enslavement meant spiritual estrangement: "I was the forsaken of God, it seemed—the despised and hated of men!"³⁵

Amid this confusion, many grasped the concept of hell and used it to offer some form of orientation. Taking what whites often deployed as a scare tactic or as a way to demean African Americans as devils, African American writers countered that they were not evil: the system they lived in, the world the masters and mistresses made, was. Once again they referred to slavery as a place, experience, and time of hell. The hell metaphor addressed problems of their souls as well as their bodies. Samuel Northrop remembered how he prayed while being whipped, but God failed to answer. "I was all on fire," he wrote of his physical sensations, "My sufferings I can compare to nothing else than the burning agonies of hell!"³⁶ Henry Bibb described his enslavement as "hell upon earth" and claimed of the slave prison he labored in, "The first impression which was made on my mind when I entered this place of punishment, made me think of hell, with all its terrors of torments; such as 'weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.' Which was then the idea that I had of the infernal regions from oral instruction."³⁷ After describing just some of the sexual and physical exploitation she encountered, Harriet Jacobs wrote, "Somebody has called it 'the atmosphere of hell'; and I believe it is so."³⁸

Most often it was the physical brutality of slavery that former slaves described as demonic and hellish. These writers seemed to acknowledge or

³³ Graham Russell Hodges, ed., *Black Itinerants of the Gospel: The Narratives of John Jea and George White* (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1993), 90, 94. For more on Jea, see Pierce, *Hell without Fires*, chap. 2.

³⁴ Stearns, *Narrative of Henry Box Brown*, 16.

³⁵ Gilbert Osofsky, ed., *Puttin' On Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 297.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 243.

³⁷ Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb*, 92. For more on antebellum prisons as hell, see Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction: Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), chap. 6.

³⁸ Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 63. For more on former slaves and abolitionists using discourses of pain and cruelty, see Clark, "Sacred Rights of the Weak," 463–93.

claim special knowledge about hell because of the embodied torment they experienced. Rather than create robust fictional accounts of hell, as European writers in the mold of Dante and his *Inferno*, African Americans drew from their own whipped backs, shackled ankles and wrists, slapped legs, arms, and buttocks, and penetrated bodies to describe hell. African Americans in slavery felt viscerally physical pain and connected it to notions of hell as an embodied place of torment.

William Anderson, a slave who told of being sold eight times and whipped three hundred times in his narrative, noted that the whippings he received and saw others experience were a “hellish sport” played by slaveowners.³⁹ Black abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet reported that in slavery, “Our young men . . . are called to witness the agonies of the mothers who bore them, writhing under the lash; and as if to fill to overflowing the already full cup of demonism, they are sometimes compelled to apply the lash with their own hands. Hell itself cannot over-match a deed like this.”⁴⁰

Sexual mistreatment and the selling of children away from parents also elicited references to hell, devils, and demons. As Harriet Jacobs described the back and forth between her master and mistress over whether he was having a secretive affair with Jacobs and as her master used trickery and misdirection to hide his indiscretions and have his wife whip Jacobs, the slave girl exploded, “Truly, Satan had no difficulty in distinguishing the color of his soul!”⁴¹ William Anderson discussed how at the New Orleans slave auction, the women “were stripped and whipped.” These women were beaten “until they yielded; then by debauchery and incest” raped by the white men. Anderson could only conclude, “If there is anything like a hell on earth, New Orleans must be the place.” He also described how one overseer, “an awful tyrant—a monster among the negro race,” forced “married and single” women to his bed. Eventually two slaves knocked him down and then “some little black thing or devil made his appearance.” This “thing,” which other than being colored black went without description, begged them not to murder the overseer. They ignored it. They dumped his corpse on the side of the road. The slaves supposed that now the overseer “dealt with the devil, and this was his black brother, who came to relieve him. But the slaves were too strong for the devil.”⁴² After Frederick Douglass had achieved freedom and then had children with his wife Anna, he experienced a new fear and rage when he imagined the possibilities of losing

³⁹ William J. Anderson, *Life and Narrative of William J. Anderson, Twenty-four Years a Slave; Sold Eight Times! In Jail Sixty Times!! Whipped Three Hundred Times!!!* (Chicago: Daily Tribune Book and Job Printing Office, 1857), 44.

⁴⁰ Quoted in William Wells Brown, *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (New York: Thomas Hailton, 1863), 151.

⁴¹ Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 54.

⁴² Anderson, *Life and Narrative of William J. Anderson*, 17, 22, 50.

them. As he wrote in 1855, "Oh! sir, a slaveholder never appears to me so completely an agent of hell, as when I think of and look upon my dear children. It is then that my feelings rise above my control. . . . The grim horrors of slavery rise in all their ghastly terror before me."⁴³

The sounds of slavery, too, led some to liken it to hell. The auralty of violence and agony could, at times, carry the hellish qualities of slavery where the eye could not see. "I witnessed no barbarity myself," explained William Thompson, who was originally from Richmond, Virginia, "but have seen slaves handcuffed and kept in jail. I have heard their cries when they were punished. Slavery has no pleasancess; it is cousin to hell."⁴⁴ Another formerly enslaved man who labored on the Mississippi River remarked, "Before you can see persons on the farms, you hear the whips crack and the slaves cry out. I have heard them every morning, when passing up or down the river,—'Oh Lord! master!—Oh Lord! master!' It seems as I heard them in the dark, as if hell was there, and I heard the cries of them who were just going into it."⁴⁵ When Lewis Charlton, who lived and labored in Maryland and Georgia before his freedom, thought back to slavery and recalled the "Satanic influence" that seemed to control his masters and mistresses, he was led to "hear the groans, shrieks and wails of broken hearted wives." Slavery seemed to destroy white families too, and he could still "hear the father curse the wife, son curse the father, and wife curse the husband."⁴⁶

To Charlton, his mistress "seemed possessed with some Satanic influence." She was "never in her glory unless she could have her slaves tied up to the whipping post, stripped naked, with a pair of flat irons fastened to their feet, then she would stand by, drawing the lash like an infuriated demon." The physical violence joined the sounds of terror. "My imagination carries me back again, to the horrors and heart-rending bloody scenes of slavery. I see again a down-trodden race, whips, chains, tears; I hear the groans, shrieks and wails of broken hearted wives; . . . I see men, women and children covered with blood, gashed and hacked to pieces."⁴⁷

By drawing attention to the sounds of torture and how these aural experiences conjured images of hell, these African Americans directly chal-

⁴³ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968), 426. For more on the fears and stories associated with being sold, see Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 22–23.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery: The Refugee, or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856), 136.

⁴⁵ Quoted *ibid.*, 274.

⁴⁶ Edward Everett Brown, *Sketch of the Life of Mr. Lewis Charlton, and Reminiscences of Slavery* (Portland, ME: Daily Press Print, n.d.), 1–2. For more on how Northerners "heard" the tortures of slavery, see Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), chap. 6.

⁴⁷ Brown, *Sketch of the Life of Mr. Lewis Charlton*, 1–2.

lenged the sonic desires of plantation masters. Historian Mark M. Smith has detailed in his study of sounds in nineteenth-century America that slaveholders longed to create a plantation South defined aurally by pastoral quietude. Southern white planters championed their society as sonically sonorous and contrasted it with what they heard as cacophonous chaos in Northern industrialism. One white Southerner, for instance, remembered of the Old South that it was defined by the “hum of the spinning wheel.” The “stirring whiz of the weaver’s shuttle” was matched “by the melody of plantation songs.”⁴⁸

Some African Americans heard and told of a different South. As one, Josiah, put it, slavery felt, looked, and sounded like hell. His realization of slavery’s evils were especially poignant since Josiah had worked for white slaveholders to catch runaway slaves and to discipline those who misbehaved. “As I surveyed the scene,” he explained to the author of his biography, “and listened to the groans and outcries of my afflicted companions, the torments of hell seized upon me.” The South was awful, not just for these sights and sounds, but also for having a “hot and pestilential climate.” It caused Josiah to feel “sick at heart,” and the “sight” of the slaves “haunts me.”⁴⁹

As these African American writers referenced hell and the devil, they did so in ways that were similar to and distinct from whites of the time. They shared a focus on hell that attached it to fear and pain. They shared a perspective on it as a fire and as a destination for the wicked or unsaved after death. These writers and advocates also emphasized the rhetorical power of devils and demons that could metaphorically and perhaps literally invade, influence, and deceive this world. Unlike many Northern and Southern whites, however, slaves did not draw explicitly from John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* or Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, both of which were well known among white Americans. African American authors rarely used the variety of devilish names popularized in *Paradise Lost*, such as Moloch, Mammon, or Beelzebub, and they did not provide the vivid descriptions of hell or its layers that Dante did. These people once held in bondage seemed to rely on biblical tropes more than European literature and perhaps borrowed more and more from one another as the number of their freedom narratives grew as the century progressed.⁵⁰

When those like Josiah, Henry Bibb, Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass, and Henry Box Brown used references to hell to describe the sights, sounds,

⁴⁸ Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America*, 23.

⁴⁹ Bleby, *Josiah: The Maimed Fugitive*, 66–67, 88–89.

⁵⁰ For more on Milton in America, see George F. Sensabaugh, *Milton in Early America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964); Robin Grey, ed., *Melville and Milton: An Edition and Analysis of Melville’s Annotations on Milton* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004). For more on Dante in America, see William J. De Sua, *Dante into English: A Study of the Translation of the Divine Comedy in Britain and America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964).

and feelings of bondage, they hoped to evoke sympathy and compassion from readers who would be moved to join the abolitionist cause. Historian Elizabeth B. Clark has cautioned that there may have been social and political drawbacks to this strategy. The “widespread imagery of the brutalized slave,” she claimed in her essay on pain, sympathy, and individual rights in the middle of the nineteenth century, “may also have delimited the political will and imagination when it came to define the scope of free blacks’ new ‘rights’ on paper.”⁵¹ In some ways, Gin Lum extends this concern in her examination of how white abolitionists maintained that “slavery destroys immortal souls.” Although this was a call against slavery, she maintains, it invariably presented the enslaved as soulless, or potentially soulless. In this way, white abolitionists seemed unable to recognize the full humanity of African Americans, especially the enslaved.⁵²

This may have been the case in the narratives from African Americans if the language of hell ended with discussions of brutalized slaves or of slavery as destroying their souls. But references to slavery as hell were also used to prepare readers to consider that slaveholders were not the Christians they said they were. Invoking hell set the stage for a devastating denunciation of slaveholding that pictured “the religion of slaveholders” as vile and contemptible, the wicked expression on earth of Satan’s desire to bring disorder and destruction. In this move, some African Americans endeavored to set white slaveholders apart religiously and deny their connections to authentic religion.

“DEMONS IN HUMAN FORM”: MASTERS AS FOLLOWERS OF SATAN

As African Americans drew upon the language of hell, devils, and demons to describe their experiences in slavery, they also forged it into a discursive sword to slay slaveholders. In essence, they tried to construct a “burden of white religion” that challenged slaveholders not with what they believed or what was said in the Bible but in how they treated African Americans. Historian Curtis Evans has shown that as antebellum whites evaluated African Americans and as African Americans described their religion, a “burden” was placed on black religion whereby it became the “chief bearer of meaning for the nature and place of blacks in America.” This burden constrained who African Americans could be and how their beings and beliefs were viewed.⁵³ During the same era, though, some African Americans countered with assessments of their own. They described slaveholders, slave catchers, and slave auctions as demonic in ways that presented religion not as some-

⁵¹ Clark, “Sacred Rights of the Weak,” 493.

⁵² Gin Lum, *Damned Nation*, 167–200.

⁵³ Curtis J. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

thing one believed but as something one did. Action was essential to what they deemed to be true “religion” or “Christianity,” a point the narratives insisted upon, and the litmus test of action showed that slaveholders were not Christians and perhaps did not even have a religion. These formerly enslaved writers linked their claims about behavior, moreover, to observations of the sights and sounds of slavery to present evidence of slaveholders’ evils through their bodies and their sounds. By burdening white slaveholding religion in this way, these African Americans were using the rhetoric of damnation to try to effect social transformation.

Some African Americans associated slaveholders with the devil in a number of ways. Just as some whites demonized African Americans, some former slaves shot back that slaveholders were themselves demons. For whipping slaves, they were “devils incarnate.” For selling children away or raping women, they were “hellish fiends.” William Wells Brown claimed of one slave trader, “This heartless, cruel, ungodly man, who neither loved his Maker nor feared Satan, was a fair representative of thousands of demons in human form that are engaged in buying and selling God’s children.”⁵⁴ Even for less visceral assaults, such as barring slaves from learning to read or for stopping them from attending church services, masters and mistresses could be deemed friends of Satan. Mattie J. Jackson recalled how one Sunday her mistress agreed that Jackson could attend church that evening if she completed all her chores. It seemed to Jackson that the mistress “used every possible exertion to delay me from church.” For this, Jackson invoked a trope popularized in Europe centuries earlier of the devil with cloven feet. She “concluded that her old cloven-footed companion” had impressed upon her mistress that Jackson actually had another plan for nightfall—to flee to freedom.⁵⁵

The evil of slaveholders revealed itself not just in their actions but also on their bodies.⁵⁶ Several freedpeople discussed how the bodies of slaveholders exposed their wrongs. As religious theorist Tom Tweed has remarked, “Religion begins—and ends—with bodies,” including “enslaved bodies and freed bodies.”⁵⁷ According to some African Americans, slaveholding bodies could tell a spiritual story as well. Former slaves understood that slavery was a system fixated on bodies. They had experienced the bondage of their bodies for their labor and for their procreative powers to make new bodies.⁵⁸ By locating

⁵⁴ Brown, *The Black Man*, 19.

⁵⁵ William L. Andrews, ed., *Six Women’s Slave Narratives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 26–27; for more on devil’s feet, see Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 49–51.

⁵⁶ For more on how slaves thought about the bodies and “race” of whites, see Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵⁷ Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 98.

⁵⁸ For more on the role of bodies in slavery, see Johnson, *Soul by Soul*.

evil on the bodies of slaveholders, these writers were offering a profound counter attack. William Anderson described his new master as a “hellish, rough-looking, hard-hearted, slave driving slaveholder.”⁵⁹ According to Frederick Douglass, his Baltimore mistress, Mrs. Auld, was physically transformed as she became a harsh mistress. After being rebuked by her husband for trying to teach young Frederick how to read, she became cold and cruel toward him. The change manifested itself aurally and physically: “that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.”⁶⁰ Then later discussing a group of slave traders, Douglass penned, “Such a set of beings I ever saw before! . . . A band of pirates never looked more like their father, the devil.”⁶¹ Slaveholders, in this rendering, were not born as demons. Whites were not innately or biologically evil. Instead, by participating in the enslavement of others, whether through violence or through unkindness, their bodies and even voices shifted from children of God to creatures of the devil.

One way to demonize slaveholders was to compare them physically to serpents. In this way, former slaves drew upon the long Christian tradition of seeing the snake of Genesis 1 as the devil. In so doing, they subtly drew attention away from the supposed racialized blackness of evil.⁶² William Walter discussed one particularly hated slaveholder, Dick Fallon, as “a demon” whose “glittering eyes . . . seemed to sit too far back in his head.” This “made them glitter like the eyes of a deadly serpent.”⁶³ Lewis Clarke viewed slave catchers “going about like Satan, seeking whom they might devour,” and mistresses as “snake-eyed, brawling women, which slavery produces. . . . Of all the animals of the face of the earth, I am most afraid of a real mad, passionate, raving, slaveholding woman.”⁶⁴

Frederick Douglass was probably the best at this type of comparison, and the “slave breaker” he made infamous, Edward Covey, was his prime example. In Douglass’s first narrative, published in 1845, he described Covey as snakelike. Covey “seldom approached the spot where we were at work openly, if he could do it secretly,” Douglass remembered. “Such was his cunning, that we used to call him, among ourselves, ‘the snake.’” Covey’s cunning led him to act with his body as a serpent. “When we were at work in the cornfield, he would sometimes crawl on his hands and knees to avoid detec-

⁵⁹ Anderson, *Life and Narrative of William J. Anderson*, 17.

⁶⁰ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, ed. Benjamin Quarles (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1980), 58.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁶² For more on shifting perspectives on Genesis 1, see Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent: Sex and Politics in Early Christianity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

⁶³ Thomas S. Gaines, ed., *Buried Alive (Behind Prison Walls) for a Quarter of a Century: Life of William Walker* (Saginaw, MI: Friedman & Hynan, 1892), 14.

⁶⁴ Lewis Garrard Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clark, During a Captivity of More than Twenty-Five Years, Among the Algerines of Kentucky, One of the So Called Christian States of North America* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1845), 11–12, 58.

tion, and all at once he would rise nearly in our midst, and scream out, 'Ha, ha! Come, come! Dash on, dash on!'" According to Douglass, Covey had a lot in common with the serpent of the Bible. His "FORTE" was in his "power to deceive."⁶⁵

While bodies and actions of slaveholders took on the appearances of demons, their words and voices further confirmed their evil status. Slaveholders heard and characterized slaves as "noisy," but in turn some former slaves heard and characterized slaveholders' sounds as sinful.⁶⁶ When discussing one of his masters, Henry Bibb not only referred to him as a "devil" for whipping his slaves and separating husbands and wives but also rebuked the "hellish" sounds that came from his mouth as he "was storming with abusive language."⁶⁷ Solomon Northrop described to his readers how as one overseer tortured his prisoners, "the incarnate devil was uttering most fiendish oaths."⁶⁸ Frederick Douglass routinely described the curses and severe tones verbalized from owners and overseers. Of one, he wrote, "At times, he spoke to his slaves with the firmness of Napoleon and the fury of a demon."⁶⁹ William Thompson from Richmond portrayed masters as having the power to use sound to interrupt a slave's religion: "A slave cannot pray right: while on his knees, he hears his master, 'here, John!'"—and must leave his God and go to his master."⁷⁰

It was not just what masters said or how they said it but also what they failed to say or stopped saying. William Anderson recalled that in New Orleans he was purchased by a Baptist man who "appeared at first to be a kind hearted, friendly and religious man." But quickly, the "devilment began to show itself in him." He whipped and drove the slaves mercilessly, and his "good words and deeds all left him."⁷¹

Silences mattered when it came to slavery. Historian Mark M. Smith has discussed how masters and mistresses fretted over the silences of their slaves. They feared that quiet slaves were plotting slaves, that those who failed to prattle were planning to flee or perhaps take vengeance against slaveholders.⁷² Frederick Douglass wanted to put silence to work. He chastised other free narrators, such as Henry Box Brown, for writing and speaking about how they achieved liberty. By exposing their escapes, these former slaves had given slave catchers too much information. Douglass wanted narrative and runaway silence to put fear into the hearts of evil whites so that they could experience their own kind of emotional hell perhaps before be-

⁶⁵ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 93.

⁶⁶ Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America*, 80.

⁶⁷ Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb*, 126, 146.

⁶⁸ Osofsky, *Puttin' On Ole Massa*, 243.

⁶⁹ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 83.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery*, 136.

⁷¹ Anderson, *Life and Narrative of William J. Anderson*, 23–24.

⁷² Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America*, chap. 3.

ing sent to a literal one. "I would leave him to imagine himself surrounded by myriads of invisible tormentors, ever ready to snatch from his infernal grasp his trembling prey," Douglass wrote in his first narrative. He wanted slaveholders to feel the overwhelming power of darkness and lack of sight. "Let him be left to feel his way in the dark; let darkness commensurate with his crime hover over him; and let him feel that at every step he takes, in pursuit of the flying bondman, he is running the frightful risk of having his hot brains dashed out by an invisible agency."⁷³

Openly discussing hell or referencing masters as demons could have dire consequences. Henry Bruce Clay remembered one black minister preached that he longed for the time when they would be "free indeed, free from death, free from hell, free from work, free from the white folks, free from everything." A white man in attendance threatened this preacher after the meeting that he would revoke his license if he ever spoke that way again. After that, Clay "never heard him use the words quoted above."⁷⁴ Another example did not end as well. According to Israel Campbell, when word got back to a master that one of his young slaves named Jupiter had referred to his mistress as "a little red-headed devil," Jupiter was tied down and given two hundred lashes. He then ran away and was caught. For this he was given two hundred more lashes. As Campbell concluded, "The next morning Jupiter was dead." Sometimes there was hell to pay for using the language of hell.⁷⁵

Fears of punishment, though, were matched by the idea that some slaveholders began to fear that their actions or responses to slavery would destroy their religion or keep them from heaven. One narrative told of a particularly "brutal master" in Virginia who would heat a poker and place it "on the naked backs of his poor slaves." After attending a revival camp meeting, this master returned home and shook with "terror" for his "sins." He called his slaves to him and "asked their forgiveness for his barbarity." He explained to them that "Satan had moved him hitherto," but no longer.⁷⁶ Moses Grandy claimed in his narrative that when Captain Edward Miner purchased him, he explained to those around him, "Mind, gentlemen, I do not want him for a slave; I want to buy him for freedom." Miner only asked that Grandy pay him back. "I would not have a coloured person to drag me down to hell," Miner concluded, "for all the money in the world."⁷⁷ William and Ellen Craft

⁷³ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 136–37.

⁷⁴ Henry Bruce Clay, *The New Man: Twenty-Nine Years a Slave, Twenty-Nine Years a Free Man* (York, PA: P. Anstadt, 1895), 73.

⁷⁵ Israel Campbell, *An Autobiography, Bond and Free* (Philadelphia: C. E. P. Brinckloe, 1861), 67–68.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Merwin Wickham, *A Lost Family Found: An Authentic Narrative of Cyrus Branch and His Family, Alias John White* (Manchester, VT, 1869), 21.

⁷⁷ Moses Grandy, *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy: Late a Slave in the United States of America* (London: C. Gilpin, 1843), 34.

reported a discussion between their master and an elderly woman while on a train in Virginia. The woman voiced how upset she was with her slaves for running away. She had intended to sell them so she could provide money to send “missionaries abroad to the poor heathen.” “Blast them!” she exclaimed at one point, and then tried to calm herself: “the niggers will make me lose all my religion!”⁷⁸

As slaveholders continued to hold slaves, justify it based upon Christianity, and inflict physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds on the enslaved, a conviction arose among some African Americans that slaveholders were not genuine Christians. One named Aaron explained that slaveholders could not truly “see” the Bible because their evil hearts and deeds kept them from being able to hear God’s word. “The slaveholders can’t see to read the bible,” he explained in 1845, “because their hearts are shut up with sin and iniquity, and is stained with the African’s blood.” The only explanation Aaron had for this was that “the devil that blessed them with that wicked bad deed.”⁷⁹ Another freedperson, Boyrereau Brinch, was convinced that slaveholders would never make it to heaven because they failed to follow the injunction of the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive us our trespass, as we forgive those that trespass against us.” The slave power, Brinch concluded, was nothing more than what “the arch fiend of hell, attempted to gain over this creator.”⁸⁰

Frederick Douglass described this kind of belief as an evolving one. Before he was ten years old, he came to the conviction that “in due time” God “would punish the bad slaveholders; that he would, when they died, send them to the bad place, where they would be ‘burnt up.’” Several years later, though, after feeling, seeing, and hearing more of the horrors of slavery, Douglass claimed that the slaveholder “cant [sic] go to heaven with our blood in his skirts.” Douglass concluded, “Slaves know enough of the rudiments of theology to believe that those go to hell who die slaveholders.”⁸¹

It appeared a widespread conviction that slaveholders were not true Christians and would not go to heaven. After Mary Reynolds recounted the beating she took from her white overseer Solomon, she exclaimed, “I know that Solomon is burning in hell today, and it pleasures me to know it.”⁸² During the Civil War, one black soldier in Missouri wrote to his still-enslaved daughter that he intended to free her. Even though her mistress claimed that slavery was God’s will, this soldier rejected it. “And as for her cristianantty I expect the Devil has Such in hell. You tell her from me that She is the frist

⁷⁸ William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom: Or, the Escape of William and Ellen Craft from Slavery* (London: William Tweedie, 1860), 65–66.

⁷⁹ Aaron, *The Light and Truth of Slavery: Aaron’s History* (Worcester, MA: 1845), 25–26.

⁸⁰ Benjamin F. Prentiss, *The Blind African Slave, or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nick-Named Jeffrey Brace* (St. Albans, VT: Harry Whitney, 1810), 147–48.

⁸¹ Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 68, 90, 195.

⁸² Quoted in Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 35.

Christian that I ever hard say that aman could Steal his own child especially out of human bondage.”⁸³

All of this added up to a position for some that slaveholders were worse than hypocrites or heathens. They were not Christians at all, but the children of the devil who lacked any “religion” or potentially lost religion by holding onto slaves. Francis Federic described how after a particularly bad whipping of one slave woman, a group of slaves had a meeting and “decided by two-thirds of the company that ‘the debil was but a debil,’ but that their masters professed to be Christians, and yet their acts made them worse than the devil.”⁸⁴ Leonard Black rested his claim on the Bible. “I can prove by the scriptures that slave-holders are worse than the devil,” he wrote, “for it is written in St. James, ‘Resist the devil, and he will flee from you;’ but if you undertake to resist the slave-holder, he will hold you the tighter.”⁸⁵ Harriet Jacobs described one master who “boasted the name and standing of a Christian, though Satan never had a truer follower.”⁸⁶

Frederick Douglass refused the right of slaveholders to claim Christianity. He rhetorically deployed separable categories for “the religion of the South” and “the religion of Christianity” and often discussed how the two had nothing in common. The “religion of the south is a mere covering for the most horrid crimes,” he fumed in his first narrative, “a dark shelter under, which the darkest, foulest, grossest, and most infernal deeds of slaveholders find the strongest protection.” He concluded that in slavery “we have religion and robbery the allies of each other—devils dressed in angels’ robes, and hell presenting the semblance of paradise.”⁸⁷

At their most extreme in these questions of religious authenticity, a few African Americans maintained that masters had no religion. This was, perhaps, a counter to whites’ descriptions of African peoples as having “no religion.” Advocating slavery as a positive good, for example, Charles Colcock Jones explained that as the original African slaves died out, their children were “better looking, more intelligent, more civilized,” and “more susceptible of religious impressions.” Since they had “no religion to renounce,” they “grew up in the belief of that of their masters.”⁸⁸ Former slave Charles Ball recounted his grandfather’s counter opinions. “He entertained strange and

⁸³ “Missouri Black Soldier to His Daughters, and to the Owner of One of the Daughters,” Freedmen and Southern Society Project, <http://www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/rice.htm>.

⁸⁴ Francis Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky* (London: Wertheim, Macintosh, & Hunt, 1863), 67.

⁸⁵ Leonard Black, *The Life and Sufferings of Leonard Black, A Fugitive From Slavery* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), 19–20.

⁸⁶ Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 76–77.

⁸⁷ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 110, 157. For more on Douglass and definitions of religion, see Jon Pahl, *Empire of Sacrifice: The Religious Origins of American Violence* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 76–84.

⁸⁸ Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States* (Savannah, GA: Thomas Purse, 1842), 64.

peculiar notions of religion," Ball explained, "and prayed every night, though he said he ought to pray oftener." Ball's grandfather "never went to church or meeting" and he maintained "that the religion of this country was altogether false, and indeed, no religion at all."⁸⁹ After watching a revival meeting where some masters sang and prayed, one former slave asked another "if there is any religion in that noise." The friend shot back, "Pshaw, no. . . . Religion is willing and doing good to others—this is only bawling."⁹⁰

As African American antislavery writers questioned the religions and Christianity of slaveholders, as they compared masters and mistresses to demons in body, speech, and action, and as they time and again referenced slavery as hell on earth, they endeavored to place a burden on white religion. Masters had the authority of the law, the whip, and the sale. They could and did affix bells to slaves to hear their movements.⁹¹

CONCLUSION

When Henry Box Brown set out to tell his tale, he did not resort to citing specific biblical verses or debating what a sacred book had to say about chattel slavery. He had no interest in biblical exegesis. As he understood it, he did not need the text alone. He had his experience. He had seen, felt, and heard the horrors of slavery and it was so awful that he determined to free himself by any means, even if it meant stuffing himself into a small box and perhaps suffocating as the United States postal service worked unknowingly as his personal overground railroad.

Brown knew a thing or two about illusion. When he concluded his thoughts about Southern religion, however, he turned to the concept of delusion. "One word concerning the religion of the South," he told his readers. "I regard it as all delusion, and that there is not a particle of religion in their slaveholding churches." Slavery was a physical, spiritual, and emotional experience only comparable to hell, and slaveholders would eventually pay the price when they spent eternity there. As African American writers and spokespeople like Brown deployed concepts of ultimate evil, they did so to represent their enslavement, to approach religion as an embodied and lived experience and not simply a set of ideas, and to place upon slaveholders a burden that in order to truly be religious, they must abandon

⁸⁹ Charles Ball, *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1837), 21–22.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America*, 78; J. W. Loguen, *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, As A Slave and As a Freeman* (Syracuse, NY: J. G. K. Truair, 1859), 262–63. A white minister in Ohio echoed this assertion. In an 1845 debate over whether slavery was sinful, he made a claim that certainly Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Henry Box Brown would have applauded: "where there is no every-day justice among men, there can be no religion." See *A Debate on Slavery: Held in the City of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: William H. Moore, 1846), 172.

⁹¹ Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America*, 73.

the practice of slavery. If "the demon of pro-slavery, lies coiled up in your heart," Brown concluded, then God will have nothing to do with you. It would be better to get as far away from physical experiences of sight and sensation and thrust yourself into an "impenetrable cave, where no eye can behold your demon form."⁹²

⁹² Stearns, *Narrative of Henry Box Brown*, 47, 55, 91.

Did Johannes Kepler Have a Positive Theory of the Real Presence?

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As historians of science have long emphasized, Johannes Kepler's earliest field of interest was not astronomy but theology. While the connections between Kepler's Lutheran piety and his heliocentric cosmology have been richly explored, the aim has typically been to shed better light on Kepler's scientific achievements rather than to probe the merits of his theological views.¹ With only a few notable exceptions, scholars have shown little interest in Kepler's contributions to Christian theology even though Kepler wrote two treatises on the Lord's Supper.² Similarly, musicologists who have examined Kepler's contribution to music theory have not considered its relevance to Kepler's sacramental views.³ The purpose of this article is to call attention

¹ Prominent examples of this approach include Bruce Stephenson, *The Music of the Heavens: Kepler's Harmonic Astronomy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Rhonda Martens, *Kepler's Philosophy and the New Astronomy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Peter Barker and Bernard Goldstein, "Theological Foundations of Kepler's Astronomy," *Osiris* 16, no. 1 (2001): 96; and Peter Barker, "The Lutheran Contribution to the Astronomical Revolution: Science and Religion in the Sixteenth Century," in *Religious Values and the Rise of Science in Europe*, ed. J. Brooke and E. Ihsanoğlu (Istanbul: Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 2005), 31–62.

² Such exceptions include E. W. Gerdes, "Johannes Kepler as Theologian," *Vistas in Astronomy* 18 (1975): 339–67; Jürgen Hübner, "Kepler's Praise of the Creator," *Vistas in Astronomy* 18 (1975): 369–82, and *Die Theologie Johannes Keplers zwischen Orthodoxie und Naturwissenschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1975); Maximilian Lanzinner, "Johannes Kepler: A Man without Confession in the Age of Confessionalization?," *Central European History* 36, no. 4 (2003): 531–45; Charlotte Methuen, "On the Problem of Defining Lutheran Natural Philosophy," in Brooke and Ihsanoğlu, *Religious Values and the Rise of Science in Europe*, 63–80 (reprinted in C. Methuen, *Science and Theology in the Reformation* [London: T & T Clark, 2008], 94–111); and Aviva Rothman, "From Cosmos to Confession: Kepler and the Connection between Astronomical and Religious Truth," in *Change and Continuity in Early Modern Cosmology*, ed. Patrick J. Boner (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 115–34. For a useful criticism of the thesis of "Lutheran astronomy," see Gábor Almási, "Rethinking Sixteenth-Century 'Lutheran Astronomy,'" *Intellectual History Review* 24, no. 1 (2014): 5–20.

³ See, e.g., Marion Lars Hendrickson, *Musica Christi: A Lutheran Aesthetic* (New York: Lang, 2005), 70–77; D. P. Walker, "Kepler's Celestial Music," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967): 228–50; Mark A. Peterson, "Kepler and the Music of the Spheres," in *Galileo's Muse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 174–96; Peter Pesic, "Kepler and the Song of the Earth," in *Music and the Making of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 73–88.

to Kepler's defense of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the communion bread and wine.⁴ Granted that Kepler's religious imagination helped to bring about the scientific discoveries for which he is justly famous, is the reverse true? Did Kepler's scientific imagination yield fruitful ideas in the realm of Christian theology? The question is all the more compelling in that Kepler, as we shall see, anticipated aspects of Leibniz's later approach to the Eucharist, aimed at reconciling Lutherans and Calvinists.⁵

Max Caspar tells us that "since boyhood, Kepler's religious disposition was pronounced" and "assumed exaggerated forms" such as imposing penances on himself and blaming "the worldliness of his life" for the fact that he lacked the gift of prophesy.⁶ An able student, Kepler attended the lower seminary (1584), higher seminary (1586), and then the Stift in Tübingen (1589) with a view toward eventual Lutheran ordination.⁷ At Tübingen, where Jakob Andreä was chancellor from 1580 to his death in 1590, Kepler was trained by Lutheran theologians who were strongly committed to Luther's doctrine of Christ's ubiquity, according to which the divine property of "imensity" had been communicated to Christ's human nature.⁸ Lutherans held that Christ is bodily present everywhere according to his human flesh, albeit "illocally," that is, uncircumscribed by "place."⁹ As a theology student at Tübingen from 1589 to 1594, Kepler studied the Formula of Concord (1577) that had been framed in large part by Jakob Andreä for the purpose of imposing Lutheran ubiquitism on the clergy and teachers of Württem-

⁴ In her reflections in "On the Problem of Defining Lutheran Natural Philosophy," Methuen has proposed that eucharistic controversy may well provide an especially fruitful means to characterize elusive confessional differences regarding the study of nature. See C. Methuen, *Science and Theology in the Reformation*, 106–9.

⁵ Irena Backus, "Leibniz's Concept of Substance and His Reception of John Calvin's Doctrine of the Eucharist," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19, no. 5 (2011): 917–33.

⁶ Max Caspar, *Kepler, 1571–1630*, trans. C. Doris Hellman (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 42–43.

⁷ Ibid., 40–46. For the context of Kepler's education at Tübingen, see C. Methuen, *Kepler's Tübingen: Stimulus to a Theological Mathematics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); Sachiko Kusukawa, "Lutheran Uses of Aristotle: A Comparison between Jacob Schegk and Philip Melancthon," in *Philosophy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Constance Blackwell and S. Kusukawa (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 169–88; and Barker, "Lutheran Contribution to the Astronomical Revolution."

⁸ The Tübingen theologian Matthias Hafenreffer will cite Luther's key statement in this regard to Kepler in 1619: "Wo du nur Gott hinsetzest, da must du mir die Menschheit hinsetzen"; see Günter Grassmann, *Fortress Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 30. A solid introduction to the controversy is given by Cees Leijenhorst and Christoph Lüthy, "The Erosion of Aristotelianism: Confessional Physics in Early Modern Germany and the Dutch Republic," in *The Dynamics of Aristotelian Natural Philosophy from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by C. Leijenhorst, C. Lüthy, and Johannes M. M. H. Thijssen (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 375–411; see also Joar Haga, *Was There a Lutheran Metaphysics?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

⁹ Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 175–80. The phrase was taken by Luther from scholastic theology, where it was used for spiritual substances such as angels; see Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 158.

berg.¹⁰ Kepler soon came to the private conclusion that the doctrine of ubiquity had been formulated rashly, even ad hoc, solely to defend Christ's real presence in the Eucharist against both Zwingli's symbolic view and Calvin's doctrine that Christ inheres in the host only through power sent down from heaven and only for the elect.¹¹ Nevertheless, when Kepler was chosen by the Tübingen faculty to teach mathematics at the Lutheran seminary of Graz in 1594, he signed the Formula of Concord.¹² As we will see, Kepler's discoveries in cosmology will further strengthen his opposition to Luther's doctrine of ubiquity and to the Formula of Concord, while inspiring him with an alternative doctrine based on interpreting Christ's sacrificed body to be subtilized into the essence of universal harmony.¹³

Since the decision to sign or not to sign the Formula of Concord played a pivotal role in Kepler's life, let us briefly review some of the doctrines of the formula that concern the Eucharist. In section 7, the formula affirms Christ's real presence in the communion elements by stating, against Zwingli and Calvin, that "the body and blood of Christ are received with the bread and wine, not only spiritually by faith, but also orally."¹⁴ The formula also affirms against Zwingli and Calvin "that not only the true believers and the worthy, but also the unworthy and unbelievers, receive the true body and blood of Christ." Since Kepler rejected only the ubiquity doctrine, not any other aspect of the Lutheran Eucharist, we must assume that he embraced

¹⁰ Hübner, *Die Theologie Johannes Keplers*, 2–8. See further, Susan S. Mobely, *Confessionalizing the Curriculum: The Faculties of Arts and Theology at the Universities of Tübingen and Ingolstadt in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 213, 223; and Paul F. Grendler, "The Universities of the Renaissance and Reformation," *Renaissance Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2004): 21 n. 40. Caspar (*Kepler*, 48) points out that Kepler's astronomy teacher, Michael Maestlin, obtained his post in 1583 because his predecessor, Phillip Apian, had been forced to resign when he refused to sign the formula. For the importance of Apian, see C. Methuen, *Kepler's Tübingen*, 100–101 and 168–71.

¹¹ Caspar, *Kepler*, 52, and M. Caspar, ed., *Jo. Kepleri Notae ad Epistolam D. D. Maththiae Hafenrefferi, quam is ad Keplerum scripsit, Anno 1619* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1932), 49.

¹² See Aviva Rothman, "Far from Every Strife: Kepler's Search for Harmony in an Age of Discord" (doctoral diss., Princeton University, 2012), 57 n. 76, citing Volker Schäfer, "Keplers Unterschrift unter die Konkordienformel," *Blätter für württembergische Kirchengeschichte*, Sonderdruck 108/109 (2008/2009): 437–38.

¹³ As Methuen points out, Kepler's embrace of Plato warrants investigation. She remarks that, in addition to Melanchthon's positive regard for geometry and astronomy, Melanchthon's student Samuel Eisenmenger, who taught mathematics and astronomy in Tübingen from 1557 to 1567 (and thus who likely taught Kepler's teacher Michael Maestlin) held a public oration in 1563 in which he extolled Plato and the religious importance of astronomy. See C. Methuen, "'To Delineate the Divinity of the Creator': The Search for Platonism in Late Sixteenth-Century Tübingen," in *Religion und Naturwissenschaften im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. K. von Greyerz, T. Kaufmann, K. Siebenhüner, and R. Zaugg (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2010), 186–90.

¹⁴ Formula of Concord, in *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 507–13. Subsequent citations from the Formula of Concord are from the same source. For further discussion, see Irene Dingel, "The Culture of Conflict in the Controversies Leading to the Formula of Concord (1548–1580)," in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1657*, ed. R. Kolb (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 15–64.

these two anti-Calvinist propositions, *manducatio oralis* and *manducatio indignorum*, without difficulty.¹⁵ On the negative side, Kepler was asked to deny the Calvinist rejection of Christ's real presence, namely, to deny that "in the Holy Supper only the power, efficacy, and merit of the absent body and blood of Christ are distributed." He was also asked to deny the Calvinist argument against both ubiquitism and the Real Presence taken together, namely, to deny that "the body of Christ is so enclosed in heaven that it can in no way be at once and at one time in many or all places upon earth where his Holy Supper is celebrated." Tübingen theologians had thus cemented Luther's ubiquity doctrine into Eucharistic orthodoxy. They insisted that denying the "illocal" ubiquity of Christ's flesh was tantamount to denying the literal truth of Christ's words concerning the communion bread, "Hoc est corpus meum." Signing the Formula of Concord, in short, forced Kepler to reflect carefully on the presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist and on how to defend it without having recourse to Lutheran ubiquitism.¹⁶

What, then, is body? Kepler assigned a fundamental role to body in his first published work, *Mysterium cosmographicum* (1596). Far from arguing that God first created matter, or some kind of limitless homogenous space, Kepler argued, "It was body [*corpus*] which God created in the beginning; and if we know the definition of it, I think it will be fairly clear why God created body [*corpus*] and not any other thing in the beginning. I say that what God intended was quantity. To achieve it he needed everything which pertains to the essence of body [*ad essentiam corporis*]." ¹⁷ Body is fundamental to God's plan because it affords God with a principle of finitude—with "quantity." Since God was bound by his perfect goodness to create the most beautiful universe possible (*pulcherrimum*), God turned to three-dimensional body in order to avail himself of rational constraints upon which to shape the created cosmos and determine a finite number of planets. As Kepler explained to Michael Maestlin, "We see that God created the cosmic bodies according to a fixed number. Number, however, as it is found in the universe, is an accident of quantity. For indeed prior to the universe there was no number ex-

¹⁵ See Matthias Hafenreffer's letter to Kepler of July 31, 1619, citing Kepler's own words back to him: "In Articulis caeteris omnibus acquiesce Augustanae Confessionioni et Formul. Concord," in *Johannes Kepler Gesammelte Werke*, 22 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1937–2009), 13:41, cited hereafter as KGW.

¹⁶ The idea of appealing to examples from astronomy was not, in itself new. Zwingli, in *Carolum Imperatorem Fidei Ratio* (Zurich, 1530), cites the sun to justify rejecting ubiquitism in article 8, p. 12: "Exemplum est sol, cuius corpus in uno loco est, virtus autem porrò omnia pervadit." (I thank my anonymous reviewer for this reference.)

¹⁷ Johannes Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, in KGW 1:23: "Corpus erat id, quod initio Deus creavit." Citing *The Secret of the Universe*, translated by A. M. Duncan (New York: Alaris Books, 1981), 92–93, but changing Duncan's translation in order to be faithful to the Latin text. Duncan translates "corpus" as "matter," without justification. Indeed Kepler had the word "materia" available to him if he had wished to use it. No doubt Duncan assumed that God created "matter" before anything else—missing Kepler's point. See also Alain Segonds, *Le secret du monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), in which the Latin is translated faithfully: "Ce que Dieu créa au commencement c'était le corps" (63).

cept for the Trinity, which is God himself. This means that if the universe was made according to the measure of numbers, it must have been made according to the measure of quantity. But in neither the line nor the plane surface is there number, but only infinity. Therefore it is in bodies.”¹⁸ There are three kinds of quantity in the universe, Kepler says—namely, shape (*figura*), number (*numerus*), and bodily size (*amplitudo corporum*). Three-dimensional quantity was required, moreover, in order to bring the two basic constructive principles of geometry, curvature (constructed by compass), and rectilinearity (constructed by straight edge), into some sort of relation, as Kepler explains further: “God decided therefore that quantity should exist before all other things so that the Curved and the Straight could be compared.”¹⁹ The Curved, which symbolizes God’s essence taken in itself, is best expressed by a spherical surface, which is a fitting image of God’s Trinity since it includes center, radius, and surface indivisibly in itself. The most perfect three-dimensional “quantity” is thus the finite sphere, which God chose to be the form of the physical universe.²⁰

If God had taken only the Curved as a principle, there would be nothing in the quiescent universe but the sun at its center as the image of the Father, the sphere of fixed stars at its circumference as the image of the Son, and celestial air filling everything in between as the image of the Holy Spirit.²¹ Since there are, in fact, planets moving at uneven distances (*magnitudines inaequales*) from the sun, it follows that God also took the Straight as a principle. Turning to “Straight quantities” (*ad Rectas quantitates*), Kepler clarifies that the key importance of three-dimensional figures (*corpora*) in God’s plan lies in the fact that they are susceptible of having a “perfection” that bridges the distance between the Curved and the Straight—between God’s essence represented in itself (*mundus quiescens*) and God’s essence represented as Creator of a dynamic universe of creatures (*mundus mobilis*): “Let us therefore

¹⁸ Kepler to Michael Maestlin, October 3, 1595, in KGW 13:23, 35: “Videmus, deum creasse corpora mundana ad certum numerum. Numerus autem est quantitatis accidens, numerus inquam in mundo. Nam ante mundum nullus erat numerus, praeter Trinitatem, quae est ipse duos. Quare si ad numerorum mensuram est conditus mundus, ergo ad quantitatem mensuram. At in linea nullus numerus nec in superficie, sed infinitas. In corporibus igitur”; cf. *Mysterium cosmographicum*, in KGW 1:25.

¹⁹ Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, chap. 2, in KGW 1:23: “Quantitatem autem Deus ideo ante omnia existere voluit, ut esset curvi ad Rectum comparatio.”

²⁰ Compare Kepler’s letter to Maestlin, October 3, 1595, in KGW 13:23, 35: “Remanent igitur sex corpora; Globus, sive potius Sphaericum concavum, et quinque rectilinear. Shapericum ultimo caelo debetur. Nam duplex mundus, mobilis et quiescens. Hic est ad imaginem essentiae divinae in se consideratae, ille ad imaginem dei quatenus creat, et propterea tantò minor.”

²¹ Drawing on Methuen’s suggestion that Kepler’s Platonism may be indebted to Samuel Eisenmenger’s *De usu partium coeli oratio* (Tübingen, 1563), let us point out that Eisenmenger viewed the sun as a “type” of the Trinity: “Etenim trinus Deus velut in speculo in Solis corpora splendet. Tria enim distinct quasi in uno Sole apparent. Primum substantia lucidissima, à qua deinde propagantur lumen et radii, qui sunt veluti alter Sol. Ab his tertio calor vivificus, spiritus et anima, ut ita dicam, rerum procedit inferiorem” (61). Kepler, however, takes the analogy to a whole new geometric level and extends it to the architecture of the whole cosmos.

come to Straight quantities. Just as previously a spherical surface was assumed because it was the most perfect quantity, let us now jump to bodies [*ad corpora*] that we may find out what the quantities are that are most perfectly formed by the Straight and consist in three dimensions; for it is fitting that the Idea of the universe be perfect.”²² As the most divine created figure, the self-enclosed sphere is the standard of perfection by which all lesser, rectilinear bodies are judged.²³ Kepler even implies that *corpus* is perhaps most properly used to describe a rectilinear three-dimensional figure, a *Recta quantitas*, associated with the *mundus mobilis* of planets and planetary creatures. Among rectilinear bodies, exactly five, and no more, participate in the beautiful symmetry of the sphere, namely, the five regular solid figures. Determined by geometric necessity, their number is “so, and not otherwise.”²⁴ The five regular solid figures, in turn, may be fitted into one another in an ordered way around a common center, defining exactly six circumscribed spheres. The finite number of the planets orbiting the sun, like the spherical shape of the cosmos, derives from the fundamental character of body and manifests God’s excellence. In framing creation, God resolved at every turn to communicate his own divine beauty to his handiwork as far as possible. Let us note that Kepler distinguishes *corpus* from *solidum*. A solid (*solidum*) is made up of both matter and form—the (three-dimensional) geometric surface being its form.²⁵ As we saw, Kepler also uses the phrase *figura solida* to mean *corpus* in the purely geometric sense, as opposed to a material solid. We might ask, when Christ (God) said “Hoc est corpus meum,” did he include *soliditas* (flesh) in his meaning, as Tübingen Lutherans insist, or did he mean *figura solida* without matter?

In an April 9, 1597, letter to his friend and teacher Michael Maestlin, Kepler challenged the Lutheran doctrine of ubiquity based on what he had discovered in *Mysterium cosmographicum*.²⁶ Siding with Calvinists, Kepler argued that Christ’s fleshly body, as such, cannot be present without being local: “Hence the objection of the Calvinists to the phrase *illocal presence*. For the word ‘presence,’ as well as what is understood by the word, was coined

²² Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, in KGW 1:25: “Veniamus igitur ad Rectas quantitates. Sicut autem antea Sphaerica superficies ideo assumpta est, quia perfectissima fuit quantitas: ita jam uno saltu ad corpora transeamus [N.B.: Having previously translated *corpus* as “matter,” Duncan here renders *corpora* as “solid bodies”] ut quae ex Rectis perfectae sunt quantitates et tribus dimensionibus constant; nam Idaeam mundi perfectam esse convenit. Lineas vero et superficies rectas, ut infinitas, et proinde ordinis minime capaces, è mundo finito, ordinatissimo, pulcherrimo ejicimus” (see earlier comment in n. 17).

²³ Ibid., in KGW 1:27, and 1621 edition of *Mysterium cosmographicum*, chap. 2, n. 6, in KGW 8:50. See also Segonds, *Le secret du monde*, 73.

²⁴ Kepler, preface to *Mysterium cosmographicum*, in KGW 1:9, and letter to Maestlin of October 3, 1595, in KGW 13:23, 35.

²⁵ Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum* of 1621, in KGW 8:50, author’s notes on chap. 2, n. 6: “Soliditas vero tam in globo, quam in his figuris, est genuina materiae idea ut superficies forma.”

²⁶ Rothman has recently called fresh attention to this discussion in “From Cosmos to Confession”; see also “Far from Every Strife,” 42–43.

based on how this world was created to be firmly maintained in place and time [*loco et tempore*], and implies quantities [*quantitates*] even to those who are extremely cautious.”²⁷ According to Kepler, God created place simultaneously with body and with “quantity” when God created the cosmos to be well defined by finite terms.²⁸ A fortiori, a natural human body such as belonged to Jesus Christ must be finitely circumscribed by place. In *Harmonices mundi* (1619), Kepler underscored that point that material bodies necessarily “participate in Number and Magnitude; but magnitude implies their position in place.”²⁹ Nor is the fundamental connection between quantity and place the only aspect of Kepler’s *Mysterium cosmographicum* that bears on Christian doctrine: “I am of the opinion that the factions differing in religion would come one step closer if anyone took the opportunity to weigh carefully these *and similar things* selected from my little book.”³⁰ What “similar things” might theologians fruitfully weigh in Kepler’s *Mysterium cosmographicum* in the hope of overcoming sectarian differences? Kepler’s cosmogenesis affirms that “most” of the features of the world can be deduced from God’s love for mankind.³¹ God’s philanthropy but also God’s “anthropopathy”—God’s willingness to take on human nature and to suffer man’s own weak and mortal condition—entered into the very foundations of God’s plan.³² According to Kepler, since man is “the supreme end of Creation” and since “the earth was destined from the start to bear man as God’s own image,” God in the beginning went so far as to “count the sun among the planets” for the purpose of allocating the middle position among the celestial bodies to the earth.³³ Prior to creation, God had thus condescended to equate his own image, the fixed and radiant sun, with the humble planets that revolve around it—all in anticipation of the Son’s descent into Mary’s womb and union with human flesh in Jesus the Nazarene. What else in the structure of the heavens anticipates the *mysterium incarnationis*? Kepler’s early investiga-

²⁷ Kepler to Michael Maestlin, April 9, 1597, in KGW 13:64, 113–19: “Hinc illa Calvinistarum ad nomen Praesentiae illocalis. Nam et vox (praesentia) et res intellect sub voce, sesumpta est ex conditione hujus seculi, loco et tempore constantis, digitumque vel cautissimis ad quantitates intendit. Haec et similia si quilibet occasione ex meo libello desumpta secum perperderet, opinor, uno gradu proprius conventuras partes in religione dissidentes.” My translation follows Aviva Rothman’s translation (“Far from Every Strife,” 43). However, I translate *loco et tempore* as “place and time” rather than “space and time,” which would be “spatio et tempore.”

²⁸ Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, 1621, chap. 11, n. 13, in KGW 8:64: “Spatium vero sine corpore pura est negatio.” Compare Segonds, *Le secret du monde*, 98: “un espace sans corps n’est qu’une pure négation.”

²⁹ Johannes Kepler, *Harmonices mundi* (Linz, 1619), bk. 4, chap. 3, 124: “Quae verò materia participant illa simul et numero et magnitudine participant; At magnitudinem sequitur earum situs in loco”; cf. *The Harmony of the World*, translated into English with an introduction and notes by E. J. Alton, A. M. Duncan, and J. V. Field (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997), bk. 4, chap. 3, 312 (but where “situs in loco” is wrongly translated as “position in space”).

³⁰ KGW 13:64, 113. Emphasis added.

³¹ Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, chap. 4, in KGW 1:30; cf. Segonds, *Le secret du monde*, 76.

³² Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, chap. 4, in KGW 1:30; and Segonds, *Le secret du monde*, 237 nn. 2–3.

³³ Ibid.

tions into celestial harmonies in *Mysterium cosmographicum*, chapter 12, which he developed at more length to Herwart von Hohenburg in August and September 1599, prompted him to draw a distinction between solid figures, which provide a rational archetype for material substances, and plane figures, which provide a rational archetype for qualities like color and motion.³⁴ Kepler then mused that the “cosmopoeic logos,” or “continuously cosmocreative logos,” must perhaps “be sought in plane figures, since music here below results from motions in the air” and is best modeled quantitatively by strings/lines rather than by solid figures.³⁵

In the same late summer of 1599, Kepler was also actively reflecting on the Eucharist, and wrote a treatise on the Holy Supper, which he sent to his friend Colmann Zehentmair for comments.³⁶ Kepler’s treatise is lost, but Zehentmair’s response of October 13, 1599, provides a glimpse of its content.³⁷ First, like Calvinists, Kepler rejected a literal interpretation of the real presence of Christ’s natural human body in the host because various “absurd and unfitting” consequences follow. Second, and more importantly, Kepler argued that Christ’s natural body, as such, possesses no redemptive power. Rather, it is Christ’s sacrificed and broken body, the body that is “given up for us,” that is the bearer of redemption. Consequently, it is this sacrificed and “given up” body that is present in the host, just as the blood that is in the cup is the blood that is “shed for us.” What is present in the host, Kepler concluded, is the fruit or merit of Christ’s bodily passion, not the substance of Christ’s body: “fructus et meriti, non substantiae corporis dominici.”³⁸ Quite apart from sounding like the Calvinist view that is expressly condemned by the Formula of Concord, Kepler’s conclusion recalls the distinction that Kepler had sketched to Hohenburg between three-dimensional planets (substances) and their motions (qualities). On this analogy, Christ’s presence in the host would be in some sense qualitative rather than substantial and would be analogous to the presence of free-standing sound vibrations in the case of earthly music or of planetary orbits in the heavens.

In response, Zehentmair commented that, since “every accident presupposes a substance,” Christ cannot be present in the host qua bodily sacri-

³⁴ Johannes Kepler to Herwart Von Hohenburg, September 14, 1599, in *KGW* 14:64. For a full exploration of Kepler’s dialogue with the Roman Catholic Von Hohenburg, see Rothman, “Far from Every Strife,” 91–145.

³⁵ Johannes Kepler to Herwart Von Hohenburg, in *KGW* 14:7: “Itaque demonstratio logon cosmopoietikon omninò petenda est ex figuris planis”; and Kepler to Edmund Bruce, July 18, 1599, in *KGW* 14:128, 7: “Motus enim est in praediamiento Quantitatis, et refertur ad lineam.”

³⁶ Colmann Zehentmair to Johannes Kepler, September 23, 1599, in *KGW* 14:78: “Scriptum tuum de S. coena totum legi.”

³⁷ Colmann Zehentmair to Johannes Kepler, October 13, 1599, in *KGW* 14:78–82; cf. Hübner, *Die Theologie Johannes Keplers*, 13–14; and Max Caspar, *Kepler*, 87–88.

³⁸ *KGW* 14:80.

ficed without also being present qua body.³⁹ Furthermore, Christ's own words at the Last Supper do not refer exclusively to Christ's naked passion and merit, but to his body and blood, through which his sacrifice was accomplished. Why, then, exclude the substance of Christ's body from the host?⁴⁰ While Zehentmair insisted that he had "no wish to denigrate Kepler's pious reflections," he felt that it would be wiser to set aside human reasoning and to believe in the inscrutable *mysterium* of holy communion with simplicity and faith. Communion, Zehentmair concludes, is called a *mysterium* not only because sacraments in general are "mysteries" but because the manner in which Christ is present in the bread and absorbed by the communicant is particularly unfathomable.⁴¹

Kepler's very title, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, seems indeed subtly to suggest *Sacramentum cosmographicum*: did Kepler believe that Eucharistic theology is in some sense encoded in the heavens? After Zehentmair's response, Kepler's challenge was sharpened in order to find a sense in which Christ is bodily present in the host without involving a *solidum*—and without appearing to side straightforwardly with Calvinists, as charged.⁴² For the 1621 edition of *Mysterium cosmographicum*, Kepler wrote commentaries correcting his views of 1596. Two passages deserve our special attention. First, in commenting on how he had wanted to draw the properties of each planet from the underlying architecture of the five perfect solids and had characterized Jupiter's immediate neighbors as "malevolent," Kepler clarifies that there are no malevolent entities in the sky. Rather, malevolence is a matter of human perception, as man's sensitivity to planetary influences is analogous to man's sensitivity to music and stems from the same innate capacity to detect harmonies.⁴³ For further clarification, Kepler refers the reader to *Harmonices mundi* (1619), book 4, chapter 7, where he argues that the human soul is possessed both of a purely intellectual faculty that reasons and of a vital faculty that responds instinctively to music and to celestial radiation. The intellectual faculty (mind), which is "made in God's countenance," is analogous to a point and is innately possessed of the idea of the circle, in which all geometrical and arithmetical knowledge is stored. The vital faculty, in turn, is a "flame" that is kindled in the human heart at birth, when

³⁹ Ibid.: "Certe omne accidens praesupponit substantiam."

⁴⁰ Ibid., 80–81.

⁴¹ Ibid.; for context, see Regina Pörtner, *The Counter-Reformation in Central Europe: Styria 1580–1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 121. For further discussion, see Hübner, *Die Theologie Johannes Keplers*, 12–13.

⁴² Compare Lanzinner, who interprets Kepler's view of the Eucharist to be "symbolic" ("Johannes Kepler: A Man without Confession?," 537). See, further, Irena Backus's statement of Leibniz's challenge: "The basic question he is asking is this: how can Christ's body be substantially present in the Eucharist if we exclude the hypothesis of its local or three-dimensional presence being offered in or under or together with the piece of bread" (in "Leibniz's Concept of Substance," 924.)

⁴³ Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, 1621, chap. 9, n. 1, in KGW 8:59; Segonds, *Le secret de l'univers*, 89.

“the whole sensible shape of the zodiac flows into it.” The vital faculty is itself “a kind of zodiac circle” and responds spontaneously to the “radiant harmony of the planets.”⁴⁴ However, “this perception of the harmonies in the inferior faculties of the soul is dull and dim, and in a sense material, and under a cloud of ignorance.”⁴⁵

According to Kepler, the influence of the heavens is corrupt in postlapsarian man, not because heavenly radiation itself is evil or corrupting, but because man, being corrupt, perceives it “dimly” and “materially.”⁴⁶ While “the harmonic faculties” have been “breathed out by that essential harmony, God Himself, in the act of creation” and infused into all souls as a “particle of His own image,” sin has withdrawn man from “the paternal authority of God his Creator” so that man follows “his own whim, or rather the tyranny of Satan.”⁴⁷ Implicitly, in Jesus Christ, whose flesh is not contaminated by sin, God’s essential harmony lives and is perceived without distortion. The stars do not cause a man’s death, Kepler remarks further, rather it is “the material of the body which either suppresses the flame of life by overflowing, or deserts it by failing.” As Kepler emphasizes, “it is sin which has deprived the human race of the remedy of immortality which it was once allowed, which even now drives away, obstructs, and repels the guardian angel from his watch on life against assaults of demons, men and the elements.”⁴⁸ Because of sin, the material body of fallen man aborts the soul’s life and “obstructs” the angelic help that is divinely extended to him. Since Kepler explicitly voices the hope that his discussion will help to advance “the eternal salvation of many great souls,” we may reasonably conclude that it bears in some way on his understanding of the Eucharist.⁴⁹ Since the Savior’s body is free from sin, the flame of life in his case cannot simply be suppressed or deserted. Christ’s bodily death must involve a very unique salvific transformation.

In a second annotation of special interest to us, Kepler chides himself for his initial rejection of “lines and planes” from God’s plan for creation. Fortunately, he says, he has corrected his mistake and prominently reintroduced “lines and planes” into his theory of the heavens in *Harmonices mundi*. He had initially despised “lines and planes” out of ignorance, but he has since figured out how to establish order among them by relating the circle to its arcs.⁵⁰ “Lines and planes,” he now proclaims, turn out to be the very key that unlocks the secret of planetary motions and celestial harmonies. God

⁴⁴ Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 4, chap. 7, 372–74.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, bk. 4, chap. 2, 309.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, bk. 4, chap. 7, 381.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 384.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 384–85.

⁵⁰ For a succinct and clear description of Kepler’s investigation into regular polygons, their order and relevance to harmonics, see Caspar, *Kepler*, 284–87.

himself “inscribed lines” in his handiwork when he set the planets into motion.⁵¹ As we know, the idea of the circle, “in which all of arithmetic and geometry is stored” and which provides the key to harmonics, is possessed by the human soul both intellectually and “vitality”—as “harmonic faculties” breathed into man by God to govern both rational knowledge and instinctive behavior. Kepler’s new insight into the fundamental importance of the circle for harmonic laws dates approximately from 1616, a period when he apparently also returned to the question of the Lord’s Supper.⁵²

Kepler’s *Unterricht vom Heilige Sacrament des Leibs und Bluts Jesu Christi unser Erlöser* (Instruction on the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Redeemer) was published anonymously in Prague in 1617. The text presents itself as an informal question-and-answer catechism composed for the private benefit of Kepler’s children and household servants. As though wishing to promote a direct, simple faith, but alluding perhaps to the vital flame that receives the whole circle of the zodiac at birth, Kepler cites Mark 10:15 in an epigraph: “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” The opening questions unfold as follows:

Why does one celebrate and participate in the Supper of our Lord Christ? [Answer] As long as Christ commands us to make use of his Supper as a memorial of his bitter suffering and death, it is incumbent on every Christian to fulfill the command of his Lord.

What happens in the Holy Supper? [Answer] In it, Christ gives to us his true body, offered up for food, and his own blood shed for us for drink—not for satisfying hunger and thirst, nor for healing bodily illnesses, but for strengthening the faith thereby, and for healing the afflicted conscience.

How should a Christian apply for this [*sich darzu schicken*]? [Answer] He should test himself with great dedication and ardent devotion, as St. Paul teaches, I Corinthians 11.⁵³

Kepler emphasizes that the worthy communicant must prepare himself to receive communion by examining his conscience and recognizing that the evil inclinations that prompt him to envy, anger, sin, and disorder condemn him to eternal death: “Hopefully, the penitent discovers all kinds of gruesome sins and eternal death in himself, for he inherits the sinful nature of

⁵¹ Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, 1621, chap. 2, n. 1, in KGW 8:50; Segonds, *Le Secret du monde*, 72.

⁵² Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, Envoi, 490: “Little by little, especially in the last three years, I came to the harmonies, deserting the solid figures over fine details.”

⁵³ Johannes Kepler, *Unterricht*, in *Joannis Kepleri astronomi opera omnia*, ed. Christian Frisch (Frankfurt: Heyder & Zimmer, 1870), 8:125. This and all of the translations from Kepler’s *Unterricht* are by Mark DeVoto, whom I warmly thank. Kepler’s *Unterricht* is also found in KGW 12:12–18, in Gothic script.

his elders, and has made himself complicit many times over with their own sins. For the wages of sin is death, as St. Paul says. This should each one firmly believe who seeks to share the Holy Supper.”⁵⁴

A sound acknowledgment of sin and death—a fear of being cut off from God forever—prepares the communicant to receive Christ’s body and blood.⁵⁵ Kepler insists on the need to “get rid of Evil in one’s heart” and to beg for forgiveness and to resolve to live a better life. The worthy communicant must then undergo the Pauline experience of both thirsting to be delivered from sin/death and recognizing his helplessness to heal himself without “outside assistance.” This experience of helplessness may lead him to believe and trust “that our Lord God grants mercy over us, and became man for the sake of our sins, and took upon himself the law and all the sins of which we were guilty. For us and for our redemption, he took them and paid for them.”⁵⁶

While carefully emphasizing the Lutheran *manducatio oralis* that Calvinists scorn, Kepler depicts communion chiefly as a source of spiritual comfort and strength to the worthy communicant. “While we receive, with the mouth, the body and blood of our Lord,” we should view communion

as a special comfort and strength to the troubled conscience of the poor ones who feel and confess their sins in their hearts, who fear God’s wrath and death, and are hungry and thirsty for justice. To the simple conscience, the Supper is given as a certain pledge and token [*pfandt und wahrzeichen*] of God’s merciful will, that he should accept the merit of the bitter suffering and dying of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he should wish to be merciful to us if we turn with our whole heart, that we should firmly believe all of this.⁵⁷

In interpreting the words of institution spoken by Christ over the proffered bread and drink, Kepler uses the word “sign” (*anzeigen*), but he never implies that the bread is merely a sign or that it signifies an absent body. Rather, Christ’s true body absorbed with the bread signifies the institution of God’s church (Christ’s mystical body) and attests that Christ’s merit and eternal life are extended to the faithful: “He wishes to say so much: that I have taken a living human body upon myself and all that I suffer and do in and unto my body becomes all your own, for you and for your good. That I gave you my body as food is a sign (*anzeigen*) and witness (*zeugnus*), that you, as members of my spiritual body, always remain in me and live in me, and that I, as the spiritual head, live and remain in you.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Kepler, *Unterricht*, 8:126.

⁵⁵ On the Lutheran character of this fear, see Baird Tipson, “Thomas Hooker, Martin Luther, and the Terror at the Edge of Protestant Faith,” *Harvard Theological Review* 108, no. 4 (2015): 530–51.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Kepler, *Unterricht*, 127.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

The idea that Christ is present in the communion elements ecstatically, as the New Dispensation that institutes God's church and restores eternal life, is vividly conveyed in the case of the cup:

What did he say over the chalice? [Answer] In the same way he also took the chalice after the supper, and spoke; Take this, all of you, and drink from it, this is the chalice of the New Testament, in my blood, which is poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. What does that mean? [Answer] He wishes to say so much: while I take you unto me, and your sins unto me, I shall sacrifice myself unto death for the sins, I shall pour out my blood, I shall acquire mercy and forgiveness of sins from henceforth to eternity; and I give you my blood to drink as a sign and witness for encouraging and strengthening my life in you (just as drinking strengthens the life of the body, and food becomes nourishment).⁵⁹

Kepler's description of the benefits of communion again involve the controversial notion of signs. Kepler is defensive, but clearly means to use the term in a way that does not deny that Christ's invisible body and blood are present in what appears externally to be ordinary bread and wine: "Whoever thus eats of this bread and drinks from this chalice, firmly believes also these words, which he hears from Christ, and these signs [*disen zeichen*], which he receives from Christ [added in Kepler's hand: "this is not my addition, but it is found thus in the Agenda Austriaca"], and he receives this Supper as a reminder and a confirmation of his faith, he will remain in Christ the Lord, and Christ in him, and will live eternally."⁶⁰

Kepler emphasizes that the "rightful enjoyment" (*rechtschaffene niessung*) of the Holy Supper induces serenity, unity with God, and happiness, which means that the worthy communicant spontaneously delights in adhering to Christ's mystical body. Communion also produces unity among worthy communicants, which could not happen, Kepler insists, if communion did not consist of a real partaking of the true body and of the true blood of Christ. Through communion, worthy communicants are, as it were, attuned to God and to each other. Unlike Calvinists, moreover, who hold that "unbelieving, impenitent Christians do not receive the true body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, but only bread and wine,"⁶¹ Kepler affirms with Lutherans that Christ's body is absorbed by believers and hypocrites alike. Kepler indeed goes on to explain that those who knowingly receive the sacrament in a state of unrepentant sin expose themselves to physical illness ("pestilence") and even to premature death:

What does St. Paul teach about the guests at this supper? He declares that God would severely punish the unworthy guests because of the desecration of the All-

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 128–29. For Hafenreffer's disapproval of Kepler's terming the bread and wine "signs," see Hübner, *Die Theologie Johannes Keplers*, 41.

⁶¹ Citing the characterization of the Calvinist doctrine as it is rejected by the Lutheran Formula of Concord, Article VII, Negative Thesis 16, in *Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 508.

Highest Supper, with temporal and eternal punishment, temporal even with pestilence and other ills; and that he would cast away many young men out of this world before their time; all of this because he would not willingly punish eternally. For if God sends illness, sinful men will go into themselves and become proselytes, and if they therefore become accepted in honest repentance beyond this world, then they put an end to their profligate sinful lives. They do not fall again into their old ways, no longer anger God, desecrate the Supper no longer.⁶²

On the Calvinist view, hypocrites absorb nothing but bread and wine. Kepler's hypocrites, in sharp contrast, are actively chastised. Like believers, hypocrites "absorb" the Lamb's body and blood, which either awakens them to their sins through distress and prompts them to repentance or mercifully prevents them from further sin by provoking their physical demise and removing them from earthly life. As though emphasizing that something of God's fearsome beauty is perceived by all communicants, either through delight or through distress, Kepler interprets Paul's warning that hypocrites partake of communion "at their peril" to mean "at their earthly peril" but to their spiritual benefit.

Kepler sent his *Unterricht* to his friend, the Tübingen theologian Matthias Hafenreffer, along with his reasons for doubting the Lutheran doctrine of ubiquity and for refusing, since 1612, to sign the Formula of Concord.⁶³ Kepler received a long written rebuke from Hafenreffer in return, which he carefully annotated.⁶⁴ It was July of 1619, the same year that *Harmonices mundi* was published with a dedication to the English ruler King James I, whose dashing and reckless son-in-law, the Elector Palatine Frederick, would soon be crowned king of Bohemia.⁶⁵ Kepler had been excommunicated from the Lutheran church of Linz by Daniel Hitzler in 1612 for abiding by his doubts concerning the doctrine of ubiquity. His appeal to the Stuttgart consistory had been rejected, and his theological positions had been branded as Calvinist.⁶⁶ As we will see, however, Kepler will insist that his doctrine removes any excuse on the part of Calvinists to deny the real presence in the Holy Supper.

In his annotations to Hafenreffer's letter, Kepler argues, first, that Christ's real presence in the host must be conceived on its own proper grounds, without appealing to the doctrine of ubiquity.⁶⁷ The key, Kepler repeats,

⁶² Kepler, *Unterricht*, 129.

⁶³ For a fuller discussion of Kepler's *Unterricht*, see Hübner, *Die Theologie Johannes Keplers*, 37–45. I warmly thank Angélique Gausson for her help with Hübner's discussion.

⁶⁴ KGW 12:39–45 (Hafenreffer's letter) and 49–62 (Kepler's annotations).

⁶⁵ For a controversial, but thought-provoking view of Frederick's role in precipitating the Thirty Years' War, see Brennan C. Pursell, *The Winter King: Frederick V of the Palatinate and the Coming of the Thirty Years' War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

⁶⁶ Caspar, *Kepler*, 257–65.

⁶⁷ Caspar, *Jo. Kepleri Notae*, 51: "Contendebam praesentiam in S. Caena suis niti propriis fundamentis, quae nequaquam ab hac personali carnis Omnipraesentia (ut cui dogmata Wirtembergica necessitate injiciebant) dependeant, sed divertissima sint."

is that Christ is present in the bread and wine qua sacrificed. Christ's presence in the Holy Supper ought, therefore, to be characterized as "sacificial" rather than "personal"—*praesentia passionalis* rather than *praesentia personalis*.⁶⁸ Kepler does not deny that the sacrificed body that is present in the host is numerically the same body as belonged to Jesus, the individual who was born of the Virgin Mary and lived in Judaea.⁶⁹ His point concerns the distinctive properties of Christ's body as it is "given up" for us in ransom. Kepler implies that Christ's body ceases to be *solidum* when it ceases to be "personal" and is given up as Lamb of God. When it is viewed precisely as the anthropophatic suffering that institutes God's church as Christ's mystical body, Christ's real presence in the host (*praesentia passionalis*) is not extended and locally circumscribed in the same way as Christ's natural human body (*praesentia personalis*). Citing an expression that is also found in the Reformed theologian Amandus Polanus,⁷⁰ Kepler illustrates what he means by pointing out that Christ's blood in the communion cup is not Christ's blood "as it is contained in the veins" (the case of Christ's natural body on earth or of Christ's glorified body in heaven) but "as it is shed"—poured out from Christ's personal veins to become the shared blood of the New Dispensation.⁷¹ Christ's *praesentia passionalis* in the Eucharist seems to have the character of an effusive presence—of a dynamic dissemination. Kepler concludes that, if Lutherans gave up the (superfluous, novel, and dubious) doctrine of ubiquity and instead emphasized that Christ's real presence is inculcated into the Holy Supper on the basis of Christ's passion, "Calvinists would henceforth be deprived of any excuse to deny the real presence" in the host.⁷²

"Hoc est corpus meum": in defending the Real Presence, Kepler emphasizes that the term "real" must not be taken to refer to God's presence in its ordinary natural sense but rather must be understood as expressing the truth of God's promises, as indeed Calvinists insist.⁷³ The pious soul, Kep-

⁶⁸ Ibid., 51: "potius igitur passionalem in S. Caenae praesentiam dicendam quam personalem."

⁶⁹ Ibid.: "Itaque non negari à me *corpus praesens* etiam quatenus natum etiam quatenus in personal filii dei subsistens." Emphasis added.

⁷⁰ See Robert Letham, "Amandus Polanus: A Neglected Theologian?," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 3 (1990): 463–76; and Luca Baschera, "Ethics in Reformed Orthodoxy," in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. Herman Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 521–27.

⁷¹ Caspar, *Jo. Kepleri Notae*, 51: "Itaque non negari à me corpus praesens etiam quatenus natum etiam quatenus in persona filii dei subsistens, dummodo concedatur mihi, verbis institutionis inculcari praesentiam etiam quatenus passum, sanguis scilicet: praesens, non jam quatenus in venis, quamvis in statu glorificato fit in venis, sed quatenus effusus è venis in remissione peccatorum omninò quatenus sanguis Novi testamenti." Compare Amandus Polanus, *Partitiones theologiae*, translated into English by Elijah Wilcocks as *The Substance of Religion* (London, 1600), 348: "And the wine is a sacrament, of the blood not contained in the vaines, but shed out of the bodie upon the crosse, or as it was shed for the forgiveness of sins."

⁷² Caspar, *Jo. Kepleri Notae*, 52: "Jam sublatam futuram esse Calvinistis omnem excusationem repellendi abnegandique realem in S. Caena praesentiam."

⁷³ Ibid.: "dummodo vox realis non à modo quem natura capit, sed à veritate promittentis dei denominata intelligatur, uti et ipsis monent."

ler urges, must focus wholly on “that for the sake of which the body is present in the eucharist.”⁷⁴ Eternal life in unity with God is “that for the sake of which” Christ’s body is distributed to the faithful, as well as “that for the sake of which” God created the cosmos.⁷⁵ Christ’s real presence in the host *quatenus passum* must therefore be anticipated in some way in God’s plan *ab origine mundi*.

Kepler’s threefold theory of Christ’s presence aims at replacing Lutheran ubiquitism with a sort of *tertium quid*. First, Christ is the Son of God and is God and is present to all things and in all things qua divine Logos, through an essential and effective presence, sustaining and governing all creatures, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit (*praesentia essentialis*). Second, Christ is the plenitude of the divine Logos—the same as governs celestial motions⁷⁶—incarnate in Jesus Christ the Nazarene, united to a single finite human body circumscribed in place and time in a natural way (*praesentia personalis*), which in no way negates, or abrogates, Christ’s divine presence to all creatures and to celestial motions (*praesentia essentialis*).⁷⁷ Third, Christ is present *quatenus passum* in the sacrament of communion, through his temporal/eternal sacrifice as Lamb of God, offered up so that all who receive the sacrament worthily may “live in him” and “he in them” (*praesentia passionalis*).⁷⁸ Neither wholly transcendent nor humanly material, Christ’s presence *quatenus passum* is metaphysically liminal, drawing on both divinity and created humanity without belonging to either. Far from denying *manducatio oralis*, moreover, Kepler’s theory of *praesentia passionalis* affirms with the Lutheran Formula of Concord that what is involved in communion is a “supernatural eating,” since apparently no flesh, no *solidum*, is involved.

Mindful that Kepler is fond of analogies and that he frames analogies to express his deepest beliefs, we turn to *Harmonices mundi* books 4 and 5 in the hope of better grasping Kepler’s notion of *praesentia passionalis*. In book 4, chapter 1, Kepler argues that “pure harmony,” which “comes from mathematical categories, the circle and the arcs,” not only is imprinted innately on the human soul as God’s image but is sustained by God continuously, so that the soul “integrates all things.”⁷⁹ Since “harmony is a principle of unity,”⁸⁰ it seems that God’s image in man serves as an a priori capacity for

⁷⁴ Ibid.: “Doceatur pia mens intent esse in id, propter quod adest in Eucharistica corpus.”

⁷⁵ Compare Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum*, chap. 4, in KGW 1:30: “Finis enim et mundi et omnis Creationis Homo est.”

⁷⁶ Caspar, *Jo. Kepleri Notae*, 52: “Habitavit in nobis si ita libet, etiam illa natura quae caelestes orbes moderabatur.”

⁷⁷ The brunt of Kepler’s response to Hafenreffer focuses on arguing that Christ’s temporal and local *praesentia personalis* in Judaea is fully compatible with Christ’s transcendent *praesentia essentialis* cosmically and extracosmically as Second Person of the Trinity.

⁷⁸ Ibid., and 53: “In carne esse personaliter, et in rebus omnibus esse, quae sunt extra carnem, essentiali et effectuali praesentia.”

⁷⁹ Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 4, chap. 1, 298, 295, and 301, respectively.

⁸⁰ Kepler, *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 5, and *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, Envoi, 490: “Harmony is a certain relationship of unity.”

perceiving and embracing unity at the heart of created diversity.⁸¹ Pure harmony, moreover, is imprinted on the human soul via the idea of the circle, which is itself “a true image of the created mind that is put in charge with governing the body,” based on the fact that intersecting a sphere with a plane, which is a corporeal form, generates a circle. A plane, in turn, derives from rotating the projection of a radius from the center of a sphere to its circumference, which symbolizes “the eternal begetting of the Son.”⁸² In other words, in the archetypal circle, the Curved and the Straight are indivisibly joined and prepare the *mysterium Incarnationis*, in which the fullness of the Son (spherical surface) descends into human nature and unites with the created mind (circle) that bears God’s image (pure harmony). In Jesus Christ, God’s image in man in which the harmonies are contained is united with God the Son, Logos of creation that governs celestial motions.

Most importantly for our purpose, Kepler remarks that the circle, as such, “may be *abstracted from quantity*, so to speak, since its properties are independent of scale and can be recognized even in the narrow space of a point.”⁸³ What allows Kepler to single out the circle in this special way is presumably its perfection, namely, the fact that it is unique among regular plane figures in being symmetric under every rotation. As it requires no extension for its properties to belong to it and be perceived, the circle, image of God and source of harmonics, lies in the human soul (*anima*) in an “uncorporeal and indistant” way.⁸⁴ Presumably, the “whole radiant circle of the zodiac” also enters the “vital flame” (*animus*) of the newborn’s heart in an “uncorporeal and indistant way.”⁸⁵ The circle that lies in the intellect as a latent standard of harmony and the zodiac circle that enters the vital flame, moreover, are designed to connect innate human aspirations for harmony/beauty to the extramental harmony/beauty of God’s cosmos. A living human being (including Jesus of Nazareth) perceives harmony in God’s creation because bodily sensations are spontaneously referred to the innate circle/point within.⁸⁶ The perception of harmony is synonymous with delight, involving an aesthetic

⁸¹ Kepler, *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 4, chap. 1, 109: “Nimirum Harmonia est res una, termini sensibiles extra animam non sunt res una, nec uspiam nisi intus in anima possunt adunari,” and *Harmony of the World*, bk. 4, chap. 1, 291: “Harmony is a single thing, the sensible terms outside the soul are not a single thing, and can never be made one except within the soul.”

⁸² Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, 305.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 304; cf. *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 4, chap. 1, 119: “Est alia causa cur abstractas quantitates eligam, quia circulus, qui figura est, quartae nempe qualitates species, quamvis sit quantitas, tamen in hoc negocio, pure ut figura consideratur, sine magni vel parvi discrimine, adeo ut etiam ab ipsa quantitate, veluti a suo subjecto abstrahatur quodammodo, possitque vel in puncti angustia eius agnoscere natura” (emphasis added).

⁸⁴ Kepler, *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 4, chap. 1, 119: “Hoc opinor Proclus voluit, dum Mathematicas res in Anima dixit inesse incorporeo et indistanti modo.”

⁸⁵ See Kepler, *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 4, chap. 2, 122, and *Harmony of the World*, bk. 4, chap. 2, 308: “We see that the character of the concurrence of celestial rays at the same point, as if from a common circle, is imprinted on the soul [*animum*] of the new born.”

⁸⁶ Kepler, *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 4, chap. 1, 108, and *Harmony of the World*, bk. 4, chap. 1, 295.

communion with creation that moves man to love life, neighbor, and God. When the soul is wholly engaged in delighting in harmony, Kepler says, the soul itself is nothing but the circle of its harmonic terms, so that "Harmony in the end is made into a living soul and deified" (tandemque Harmonia penitus animificatur, adeòque deificatur).⁸⁷

In book 5, chapter 8, Kepler explains that God, for "some unknown reason," brought the planetary motions into mutual harmony by giving them "a wonderful congruence with human song."⁸⁸ The six planets provide God with one soprano (Mercury), two alto voices (Venus and Earth), one tenor (Mars), and two basses (Jupiter and Saturn), which means that the planets are really instruments with which God creates and sustains a continuous polyphonic harmony, brought about by the force that emanates from the sun and moves the planets.⁸⁹ In book 5, chapter 9, Kepler explains that the Creator, fount of all wisdom, "linked the harmonic proportions arising from the regular plane figures to the five solid figures" in order to shape "from both classes the one perfect archetype of the heavens."⁹⁰ At the end of chapter 9, in an *envoi* that Kepler compares to God's seventh day of rest, Kepler explains that his own initial mistake in privileging solids to the exclusion of lines and planes stemmed from his failure to appreciate that life is the true perfection of God's creation. Like a sculptor who starts with a piece of marble but chisels it in various ways to give it the human form in view of which the piece of marble was chosen in the first place, God started constructing his creation with the five regular solids but then fitted them for life by setting the six planets into motion and adjusting their motions to one another mutually, according to the harmonic laws that are latently contained in the circle. The five regular solids "only prescribed the external quantity of bare mass," Kepler now explains, while the circle and the regular plane figures that determine harmonies "yielded the eccentricities," which is to say that they "provided the nose and eyes and other limbs of the statue."⁹¹

Initially unaware that God had shaped the solar system "into a fully detailed effigy of a living body," Kepler had wrongly limited himself to the "simply geometrical"—to the regular solids that are "nothing more than necessary stones, substance and building blocks."⁹² As a principle, Kepler

⁸⁷ Kepler, *Harmonices mundi*, 120, and *Harmony of the World*, 306; cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982–89), 251, where von Balthasar speaks of "an attunement which is a concordance with the rhythm of God's own self."

⁸⁸ Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, chap. 8, 449, and *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 5, chap. 8, 213.

⁸⁹ Alexandre Koyré, *La révolution astronomique: Copernic, Kepler, Borelli* (Paris: Hermann, 1961), 328–45. I warmly thank Mark Kroll for his insightful explanations of Kepler's musical theory and for playing the planetary songs on his harpsichord for me.

⁹⁰ Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, chap. 9, 415, and *Harmonices mundi*, 214.

⁹¹ Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, chap. 9, 489; cf. *Harmonices mundi*, 242.

⁹² *Ibid.*

now reminds us, “the lower must give way to the higher.”⁹³ The five regular solid figures, admirably symmetric as they may be, had to give way to the higher beauty of cosmic Life. For this higher purpose, God turned to the regular plane figures in order to determine mutually harmonious orbital periods. Solid substances were modified to suit the harmonic vibrations of life, since indeed “harmonic decoration prevails over the simple geometrical as life prevails over the body or as form prevails over matter.”⁹⁴ God’s plan, all along, was to create living beauty over and above the first-order beauty that is found in solid symmetry. Kepler implies that body (substance), as such, is *imperfect*—unfinished and inert, lacking “harmonic decoration.” In order to fulfill its purpose, body must yield to activity and be transformed into life, brought into closer resemblance to the Creator, who is Pure Harmony and self-subsisting Life, through laws of harmony that prevail over “the simple geometric.”

Implicit in Kepler’s “Sabbath” review is the conviction that life, as such, shapes material substance into its own higher harmonic nature, which is an image of God’s living unity unfolding in time (*mundus mobilis*). Body was really conceived by the divine Craftsman in view of bringing about the harmonic vibrations of life, culminating in Jesus Christ, perfect image of the Father. Thus the “eternal begetting of the Son” is not limited symbolically to the sphere of the fixed stars; it is also symbolically embodied in the harmonious motions of the planets around the sun, bringing to life the harmonic relationships that are inscribed in the circle and transforming substance into music. As the essence of motion “consists not in *BEING* but in *BECOMING*,” body is continuously molded by God’s force into activity that transforms static quantity into harmonious vibrations.⁹⁵ In the limit, planetary motions replace the initial scaffolding of the five regular solids with a web of orbital lines forming “a kind of concave sphere” that is turned toward the sun,⁹⁶ implying that *corpus* becomes wholly absorbed into Life—transformed into a universal self-subsisting Harmony in which all harmonies are contained. And since Life is the perfection of body qua body, perfect body must coincide with the dynamic web of harmonies being formed around the sun as a continuous expression of the undimmed circle/point that lies in the created mind as God’s image. God’s *mundus mobilis*, in other words, is slowly transforming into an image of Christ’s mystical body—a concave sphere centered on the sun.

⁹³ Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, chap. 9, sec. 49, 488.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*; cf. *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 5, chap. 9, Epiphonema, 241: “Atqui quanto vita corpora, forma materia, tanto praestat ornatus harmonicus geometrico simplici.”

⁹⁵ Kepler, *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 5, chap. 9, 216, Axioma IV: “Essentia motus consistit non in ESSE, sed in FIERI”; cf. *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, chap. 9, 453.

⁹⁶ Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, chap. 9, 453: “And thus it comes about gradually by the linking and accumulation of a great many revolutions that a kind of concave sphere is displayed, having the same center as the Sun, just as by a great many circles of a silken thread, linked with each other and wound together, the dwelling of a silkworm is made.”

In the case of the living God-man Jesus Christ, whose fleshly body is uncontaminated by original sin, dynamic transformation of body into “deified” Harmony reaches its crux in the self-dispossession of adhering to God’s will in ransom for human sin. “Hoc est corpus meum”: no material quantity is left, only the heavenly harmony that springs from the vital circle/point that is Christ’s life in unity with God. The distinction that Kepler had once drawn between the (quantitative) substance of Christ’s flesh and the (non-quantitative) “merits” of Christ’s passion comes back to mind, but the problem of divorcing quality from substance has been solved dynamically by the new notion of transforming solid substance into beauteous motion and self-subsisting life. Life, Kepler implicitly reminds us, is not an accident of body, but is body’s true form and telos. The host, the Bread of Life, is precisely where Christ’s *praesentia personalis* “yields to” Christ’s *praesentia passionalis*, instituting the New Dispensation. The Lamb of God, supreme perfection of created life whose properties are independent of magnitude and flesh since they are all “recognizable” in a point, is offered up to communicants so that they may become Christ’s mystical body. Perceiving God’s Harmony “undimmed” when he absorbs God’s perfect body, the worthy communicant is filled with joy and healed of inner dissonance, while the hypocrite beholds his own inner cacophony with despair.

Our speculation is corroborated by the fact that Kepler compares God’s church on earth—that “for the sake of which” communion is instituted—directly with God’s heavenly handiwork. Chapter 9 concludes with the prayer that “we, as imitators of God, may emulate the perfection of His works, by sanctity of life, for which He has chosen his Church in the lands and cleansed it of sins by the blood of His son.”⁹⁷ Kepler prays, further, that God may banish from us “all the dissonances of enmity, all contention, rivalry, anger, quarrels and other works of the flesh.” The musical analogy implies that an original “consonance” with the heavens is restored by Christ’s *praesentia passionalis* in communion: “Holy Father, keep us in the concord of mutual love, so that we may be one, as You are one with Your Son, our Lord, and the Holy Spirit, and as You have made all Your works one by the delightful bonds of consonances; and so that from the restored concord of Your people the body of Your church may be built on this earth just as you have constructed the heaven itself from harmonies.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Kepler, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, chap. 9, 452, and *Harmonices mundi*, 214 (emphasis added).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* In his *De usu partium coeli oratio in commendationem astronomiae* (Tübingen, 1563), Samuel Eisenmenger concludes that astronomy helps to cure man from ambition, greed, and other sources of evils, and teaches instead the love of peace and moderation: “Nam haec studia hominum animas ab ambitione coeterisque, cupiditatibus, ex quibus et bella et relique facile existent malo, ad amorem pacis et moderationem in rebus omnibus abducere asservat” (138). Eisenmenger ascribes this belief to “divinus Plato.” He also argues that if we were able to hear the heavenly harmonies (citing Philo as his source), we would be moved with such love and desire that we would feast on music instead of on food (54).

If we have correctly discerned it, Kepler's theory of the Real Presence in the Eucharist shares a number of features with Leibniz's later theory, including an embryonic interest in the role of perception.⁹⁹ Kepler suggests that Christ's *praesentia passionalis* in the bread is real because it is perceived—perceived as the plenitude of God's music, the fullness of God's living harmony. As we know, Kepler believed that musicians in the age of grace had finally surpassed pagan antiquity by developing polyphony—imitating the Creator by playing out “in a brief portion of an hour, the perpetuity of the whole duration of the world” and tasting in a small way God's “satisfaction in His own works.”¹⁰⁰ In a rapturous “Conjectural Epilogue on the Sun,” Kepler unveils a Christocentric cosmos in which Harmony is directly connected to redemption. Moving “from the heavenly music to the hearer,” Kepler points out that, while heat, light, and moving force flow out from the sun to the planets, harmonies in turn flow back to the sun as repayments. Harmonies are not in the planetary motions as such, but require a Mind to perceive and compare the six angular velocities (periodic vibrations) that reach it. The sun, Kepler says, is not the seat of Zeus or of some abstract “Intellectual Fire,” as Proclus and other pagans may have argued, but is an allegory of God's perfect image and Son, the glorified Christ, “the Son of God who took up flesh from the womb of the Virgin Mary.”¹⁰¹ Kepler points out that, “when the ministry of the flesh was completed,” Christ occupied “as His royal seat the heavens, in which the heavenly Father is also acknowledged to dwell, as a part of the world which in some ways excels all others, that is in glory and majesty, and that He also promised to His faithful dwelling places in that house of His Father,” implying that Christ in glory delights in the music of cosmic Life that flows out of the Father's creative power just as fiery inhabitants in the sun (seraphim?) delight in the universal harmony of the planetary motions.¹⁰² Kepler also implies that the crucial transition between Christ's earthly “ministry of the flesh” and Christ's assumption into heaven in glory—namely, Christ's presence *quatenus passum* in the communion bread and wine—connects the two phases of the Incarnation, temporal and eternal, at a mystical point in which cosmic harmony, as heard from Christ-the-center, is made perceptible to wayfarers on earth, restoring their “vital flame” to God.

⁹⁹ See Irena Backus, “Leibniz's Concept of Substance and His Reception of John Calvin's Doctrine of the Eucharist,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19, no. 5 (2011): 917–33.

¹⁰⁰ Kepler, *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 5, chap. 7, 212, *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, chap. 7, 448. See also D. P. Walker, “Kepler's Celestial Music,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967): 228–50. I warmly thank Mark Kroll for his comments on Walker's paper.

¹⁰¹ Johannes Kepler, “Speculative Epilogue on the Sun,” in *Harmony of the World*, bk. 5, 493.

¹⁰² In a letter to Vincenzo Bianchi of February 17, 1619, Kepler says that he would call the sun-dwellers angels, except that angels dwell everywhere since God sends them on missions (KGW 7:213–19). Seraphim, however, have “fiery bodies” and are not typically sent on missions, their whole lives being consumed in love for God.

Quite apart from the question of why a layman like himself should be required to sign the Formula of Concord in order to be admitted to communion,¹⁰³ Kepler defended his refusal to comply with Lutheran church authorities by invoking his personal conscience, arguing that signing the formula involved condemning fellow Christians—namely, Calvinists—on insufficient grounds.¹⁰⁴ Explaining the difference between himself and his opponents, Kepler wrote: “Each of my antagonists is satisfied by only one party, imagining one eternal irreconcilable disunity and quarrel. My Hope is Christian, God willing.”¹⁰⁵ Kepler was convinced that he had metaphorically “built a tabernacle for his God” by elucidating God’s heavenly harmonies, implicitly revealing the heavens to be all at once an altar of sacrifice and communion table, where the unifying Logos of God’s creation gives himself in living form to be perceived as self-disseminating Beauty.¹⁰⁶ It is likely that Kepler’s theory of the Real Presence, which he never dared to present in writing explicitly but at which he hinted in veiled terms, was inspired by Kepler’s Christian Hope of healing disunity and quarrel. Put simply, Kepler hoped to restore harmony among Christians by interpreting communion itself to be God’s living gift of Harmony.

¹⁰³ Caspar, *Jo. Kepleri Notae*, 59.

¹⁰⁴ Caspar, *Kepler*, 227, citing Kepler’s letter to Maestlin of autumn 1616: “I shall not judge brothers; for whether they stand or fall, they are my brothers and those of the Lord.”

¹⁰⁵ Johannes Kepler, “Glaubensbekandtnus” [Profession of faith] of 1623, in *KGW* 12:22–38. For an illuminating discussion of Kepler’s ecumenical hope for a capacious and tolerant church, see Rothman, “Far from Every Strife,” 297–353. See also Methuen’s argument that Kepler is a Lutheran astronomer in the sense that he aimed at reforming astronomy. Methuen argues persuasively that Kepler viewed “God’s finger” tracing divine truth in the heavens as offering an “unaccommodated” revelation of divine providence, higher than the revelation of “God’s tongue” in the Bible: C. Methuen, “From *sola scriptura* to *astronomia nova*: Authority, Accommodation and the Reform of Astronomy in the Work of Johannes Kepler,” in *Science and Theology in the Reformation*, 77–93.

¹⁰⁶ Kepler, *Harmonices mundi*, bk. 5, 179: “ut Deo meo tabernaculum ex iis construam, longissime ab Aegypti finibus.” Whether Kepler anticipated the theological aesthetics of Hans Urs Von Balthasar by “arguing for a genuine relationship between theological beauty and the beauty of the world” deserves further investigation. See Urs Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982–89), 1:38–39, 79–80. Citation is from Joan L. Roccasalvo, “Urs von Balthasar—Theologian of Beauty,” *The Way* 44, no. 4 (2005): 57 n. 26.

Rethinking Agency after the Relational Turn*

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In 1631, Marie Guyart stepped over the threshold of the Ursuline convent in Tours, into the cloister and out of the world, leaving behind the family business, her aging father, and—what jars the modern reader—her eleven-year-old son. For years, Marie had deferred her desire to enter religious life, held back only on account of her young son Claude. But, over time, her inclinations had intensified until finally “life in the world [became] unbearable” for her.¹ On the day of her entry into the convent, Marie writes, “my son came with me, crying bitterly. Seeing him, it seemed to me that I was being split in two.”²

By all accounts, the young Claude did not easily adjust to his mother’s absence. Although Marie had seen to it that her son would be cared for by her sister and educated by the Jesuits in Rennes, Claude continued to struggle with what he perceived as his mother’s abandonment, a perception that would only intensify when Marie left France for Canada in 1639 to found a school for the purpose of educating indigenous girls, translate catechisms into indigenous languages, and serve some eighteen years as superior of the first Ursuline convent in the New World, a capacity in which she negotiated with bishops, contracted with businessmen, and managed the affairs of her community of women.

Memory of the abandonment seems to have lingered painfully with Marie, too. The abandonment features prominently in her *Relations* of 1633 and 1654 and recurs as a persistent theme throughout the body of her correspondence with Claude from 1640 and 1671. Although Marie is at pains to render the abandonment the outcome of divine inspiration and to justify it as the proximate (and happy) cause of Claude’s own eventual entry into re-

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¹ Claude Martin, *La vie de la vénérable mère Marie de l’Incarnation* (Sablé-sur-Sarthe: Solesmes, 1981), 31.

² *Ibid.*, 170.

ligious life, her repeated—almost compulsive—return to the event suggests a profound unease and nagging uncertainty about whether God really had ordered her to leave Claude and whether, in the end, the consequences for Claude had been on balance good or bad.³

So why did she do it? If we take Marie's own word for it, the answer seems clear enough: the abandonment was a sacrifice performed in imitation of Christ's own sacrifice and in submission to the uncompromising will of God. Over time, Marie's rather tepid interpretation of the abandonment as divinely inspired becomes an unequivocal justification of the abandonment as a sacrifice carried out against maternal will and in deference to divine will, a sacrifice in which the loving mother takes her place alongside the beloved son as reluctant victim, a sacrifice (like Christ's own) with redemptive and salvific consequences for both mother and son alike.

The explication of the abandonment offered by Marie would seem, then, to fit comfortably within a binary framework that would limit the options for agency to either domination or resistance. To modern ears, anyway, Marie's explication of the abandonment sounds like a story of divine domination. Writing to Claude in the summer of 1647, Marie testifies to having "struggled to keep you for nearly twelve years." Finally, however, overcome by the will of God (who was "unmoved by the tender feelings I had for you"), she "had to yield to the force of divine love and suffer this blow of division which was more painful than I can tell you."⁴ Indeed, given her own appeal to the language of combat and defeat, it is hard not to read Marie's account of the abandonment as one of her helpless domination by an all-powerful God.

But is this the right way to read the abandonment? Or, perhaps better put, is this the only way to read the abandonment? If we situate the abandonment within the context of Marie's own life history as a young widow burdened with debts from her deceased husband's failing business, could we not, alternatively, read the abandonment as an instance of resistance—of Marie's resistance to her widow's fate in a seventeenth-century France that would have afforded her few opportunities for financial stability and social acceptance? Or maybe even of Marie's resistance to the pressures and burdens of single motherhood? Could we not, to put it bluntly, read the abandonment and Marie's subsequent entry into religious life as Marie's way of opting out?

Well, yes. Although on its face the story of the abandonment in the *Relations* of 1633 and 1654 and in Marie's letters is one of submission to an uncompromising and omnipotent God, attention to the ways in which the *Re-*

³ Claude entered among the Benedictines of Saint-Maur in 1641. For a sustained analysis of the abandonment, see Mary Dunn, *The Cruellest of All Mothers: Marie de l'Incarnation, Motherhood, and the Christian Tradition* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

⁴ Marie de l'Incarnation, "Lettre CIX," in *Marie de l'Incarnation: Correspondance*, ed. Dom Guy-Marie Oury (Sablé-sur-Sarthe: Solesmes, 1971), 316; see also "Lettre CCXLVII," *ibid.*, 836.

lations and the letters fairly bustle with Marie's activity in executing God's orders belies Marie's claims to simple acquiescence. In the months preceding the abandonment, Marie busied herself with discerning just which religious community she would enter, arranging for Claude's education among the Jesuits of Rennes, and securing special permission to join the Ursulines without a dowry. More to the point, a close reading of the *Relations* and the letters suggests that Marie not only actively colluded to execute the abandonment but also creatively elaborated on the divine command. Nowhere, after all, in the *Relations* or in the letters does Marie claim that God had ordered her to leave Claude "without support"—and yet, this is exactly what Marie did in calculated resistance to the conventions of seventeenth-century French family life, which, if nothing else, obligated parents to protect the patrimony of their children.⁵ Within this historical context, the abandonment was at once an act of submission to the uncompromising will of God and, at the same time, an act of resistance against the norms of seventeenth-century French family life. If, in leaving Claude for religious life Marie submitted to God's will, in leaving Claude with nothing, Marie resisted the expectations of her time and the standards of her place.

I want to suggest, however, that limiting the abandonment to the twin axes of domination and resistance is not the richest or most profitable way to engage the question of agency in this particular case—nor in countless other cases of women in various times and places who do not share liberal Western assumptions about agency as (in Saba Mahmood's words) "the capacity to realize one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, [or] transcendental will."⁶ To suggest on the one hand, as I did above, that we might read the abandonment as Marie's resistance to her maternal responsibilities or to her social and economic fate as a widow in seventeenth-century France is to ignore—even distort—Marie's own self-representation. Nothing in Marie's *Relations* or in her voluminous body of letters would lead us to believe that Marie's entry into religious life was strategic, that the divinely inspired abandonment was really just a cover for Marie's free pursuit of her own interests—regardless of the many steps Marie took to actually execute the abandonment. Even the more moderate interpretation of the abandonment as an act of resistance against the standards of family life in seventeenth-century France does not do justice to the complexity of the event. Yes, Marie's decision to leave Claude without goods or possessions broke the one rule of early modern French parenting, but this was a decision intended to only amplify the sacrificial dimensions of the abandonment and tells us little, if anything, about the motivation behind the abandonment in the first place.

⁵ Marie de l'Incarnation, *Relation de 1633*, vol. 1 of *Marie de l'Incarnation: Écrits spirituels et historiques*, ed. Dom Albert Jamet (Paris: Desclée-de Brouwer, 1929), 271.

⁶ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8.

And yet on the other hand, to read the abandonment as an instance of divine domination is, I submit, just as clumsy. To uncritically accept Marie's account of the abandonment—that is, to adopt her interpretation of the event as operation of God's will alone—is to ignore the rhetorical conventions that structured women's writing in early modern France, conventions that fairly demanded that women efface themselves from their own texts, representing themselves as the reluctant (and incompetent) respondents to pressures imposed upon them from the outside.⁷ To uncritically accept Marie's account of the abandonment, moreover, is to ignore the evidence Marie's writings do provide of the many ways in which Marie took deliberate and calculated steps to facilitate her entry into religious life. To uncritically accept Marie's account of the abandonment, finally, is to reinscribe Marie within the patriarchal system of signs that demanded the occlusion of her own agency in the first place—that is, to marginalize women as the subjects of their own histories all over again. What, then, do we do with the vexing question of agency as it applies to the case of Marie de l'Incarnation and the abandonment?

In what follows, I propose a way of thinking about agency that avoids the exaggerated excesses of both individual autonomy and social (or, in Marie's case, divine) determinism. Building on the work of Saba Mahmood and Ben Morgan, I argue that a more capacious conception of agency depends on a reconceptualization of the subject as relational—formed not only within the context of preexisting social norms, adopted and adapted in the service of self-realization, but through encounter with and response to those multiple others alongside whom the subject coexists and without whom the subject—as she knows herself—would not exist at all. Beginning our inquiry into the question of agency from the foundation of the relational subject, I contend, offers a route between the Scylla of domination and the Charybdis of resistance and encourages us to think about agency itself as relational—as, that is, not the activity of a single subject but rather shared, or fractured, between a multiplicity of mutually dependent subjects constituted in dynamic relation to each other.

* * *

Saba Mahmood takes up the question of women's agency in *Politics of Piety*, her well-received study of women's support of the mosque movement in Egypt. Against the weight of feminist tradition that locates women's action as either submission to or resistance to the conditions of their oppression,

⁷ For discussions of the rhetorical conventions of early modern women's writing, see Patricia Pender, *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Mahmood urges her readers to recognize the ways in which agency plays out in the spaces between the binary poles of “subordination and subversion.”⁸ What women’s submission to the virtues of modesty and humility within the context of the mosque movement makes clear to Mahmood is that agency is not just “the capacity to realize one’s own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles.”⁹ Instead, agency assumes more complex configurations, shaping not only “those acts that resist norms but also the multiple ways in which one *inhabits* norms.”¹⁰ Within the context of the mosque movement, “norms are not only consolidated and/or subverted . . . but performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways.”¹¹

Two examples from Mahmood’s text might help to elucidate her broader theoretical point: in their arguments for a woman’s right to lead prayer, the women of the mosque movement do not raise the banner of gender equality but invoke instead the opinions of the juridical schools of Islam (three out of four of which, Mahmood notes, support women’s right to lead women in prayer¹²). In their discussions of the rule of modesty, similarly, women do not contest the justice of the rule but instead how it ought to be executed and whether it requires women to wear the veil. Women in the mosque movement are not engaged in the business of subverting the norms that would seem to cripple their agentival capacities but instead find ways in the lived practice of submission to those norms to exercise more subtle forms of agency.

In insisting upon “uncoupling the notion of self-realization from that of the autonomous will,” Mahmood points us in the direction of a more expansive and richer vision of agency, exposing the inadequacy of the binary framework that would perpetually pit self against society in an agonistic struggle for dominance and encouraging us to reassess the very constitution of the subject at the foundation of our conception of agency. The subject that operates as an agent within the binary framework of domination and resistance is, fundamentally, a Cartesian one—that is, a unified, self-aware, autonomous, thinking subject. This sort of subject is like a “closed circle,” separated by “its smooth contours” from objects on the outside which are either “largely irrelevant to this autonomous, self-sufficient Ego” or quickly “assimilated, thereby restoring the [subject] once again to blissful homeostasis.”¹³ From this model of the subject (forged in isolation from culture, custom, and tradition) it is but a short step to the model of the agent who

⁸ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 88.

¹³ Kathleen M. Kirby, “Re: Mapping Subjectivity: Cartographic Vision and the Limits of Politics,” in *Body Space: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Duncan (London: Routledge, 1996), 45.

acts against culture, custom, and tradition, whose gains are society's losses and whose losses are society's gains.

What Mahmood begs us to question, however, is whether this is the best model of the subject from which to begin thinking about agency. Drawing on Aristotelian ethics as well as on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, Mahmood proposes in lieu of the autonomous thinking subject an embodied and relational subject who becomes an agent not against but through engagement with culture, custom, and tradition. As Mahmood puts it, reflecting on her Egyptian subjects, women in the mosque movement do "not regard trying to emulate authorized models of behavior [like shyness, modesty, and humility] as an external social imposition that constrain[s] individual freedom."¹⁴ Rather, for these women, such "socially authorized forms of performance" are the "potentialities . . . through which the self is realized."¹⁵ Put differently, it is not in resistance to the norms of shyness, modesty, and humility that these women fashion themselves as subjects but by engaging with, interpreting, and living out these norms in the specificity of their own circumstances.

Mahmood's analysis encourages us to consider Marie de l'Incarnation, too, as a subject engaged in techniques of self-formation culled from a historically and culturally specific social context. Just as Mahmood's Egyptian subjects sought to adopt and adapt Islamic norms of shyness, modesty, and humility to the particularities of their individual lives—neither resisting nor submitting to these norms but collaborating with them in the project of self-fashioning—so we might understand Marie, particularly as she writes herself in her *Relations* of 1633 and 1654 and in her correspondence with Claude, as a subject formed and fashioned in dialogue with seventeenth-century Catholic norms of, among others, obedience and self-annihilation.

So deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and so exhaustively studied by historians and theologians as to need no further elaboration here, the norm of obedience was for Marie the key rule to which she hewed in constructing a Christian self.¹⁶ The theme of obedience dominates both spiritual autobiographies, justifying Marie's acquiescence to marriage, structuring her relationship to God both before and after entering religious life, even stimulating the very writing of the *Relations* of 1633 and 1654 themselves, which Marie composed "out of obedience" alone and then only after having been ordered "to do so three times over" by her spiritual director.¹⁷ Obedience takes center stage in Marie's letters to Claude, too, serving—tellingly—as

¹⁴ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 31.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ For discussions of the place of obedience in early modern women's writings, particularly, see Gillian Ahlgren, *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Pender, *Early Modern Women's Writing*.

¹⁷ Marie de l'Incarnation, "Lettre CXXXVI," in Oury, *Correspondance*, 426.

the chief defense of her painful decision to abandon her son to enter religious life. In a poignant letter penned toward the end of her life in 1669, Marie returns to the event some thirty years after the fact, fairly demanding Claude's consent to the abandonment and casting the decision in no uncertain terms as one made in obedience to divine command. She implores Claude to "know that when I separated myself from you, I died while still alive and that the spirit of God . . . gave me no rest until I had delivered the blow. I had to go through that and obey him."¹⁸ For Marie, both her entry into religious life and her relinquishment of maternal responsibilities (twinned together as two sides of the same devout coin) were activities undertaken out of "the fidelity that I wanted to render to the very holy will of God."¹⁹ Both were, in Mahmood's terms, concrete means of self-realization grounded in the socially authorized norm of Christian obedience.

In close proximity to the more generalized Christian norm of obedience, the distinctively seventeenth-century French Catholic ideal of spiritual abandonment left its own heavy footprint on Marie's written texts and surely inflected the pattern of her life's unfolding. Chief among the spiritual virtues in seventeenth-century Catholic France, the ideal of abandonment (rendered variously by Charles de Condren as self-annihilation, by Pierre de Bérulle as abnegation, by François Fénelon as holy indifference) implied the total cession of the self to God, a wholesale sacrifice of one's own will to divine providence, "a simple and passive submission to the impressions of the good pleasure of God."²⁰ In contrast to obedience, which required "vigilance . . . care . . . prudence . . . discretion . . . [and] ordinary efforts," abandonment involved nothing of the self "beyond an attitude of general good will that wants everything and nothing, being like a tool . . . in the hands of a worker."²¹ As Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet put it, abandonment "is the most perfect and simplest of all acts; for it is not an effort made by a man who wants to act by himself, but a letting oneself go to be moved and pushed by the Spirit of God."²² And yet, Bossuet was careful to explain, the abandoned soul was hardly an inactive or idle one, for "we are the more active when we are more pushed, more moved, more animated by the Holy Spirit."²³ Fénelon agreed: the passive contemplation anticipated by spiritual abandonment does not "exclude real action: actions positive, deliberate,

¹⁸ Marie de l'Incarnation, "Lettre CCXLVII," 836.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *L'abandon à la providence divine*, ed. Dominique Salin (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2005), 110.

²¹ Ibid., 47–48.

²² Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Ceuvres complètes de Bossuet, évêque de Meaux*, vol. 3 (Paris: Lefèvre, 1856), 510.

²³ Ibid., 110. For a brief overview of the Quietist controversy in seventeenth-century France, see the introduction to François Fénelon, *Selected Writings*, ed. Chad Helms (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), 84–111.

and meritorious of free will, or the real and successive acts that we must repeat at each moment.”²⁴

Within this distinctive milieu, Marie’s relinquishment of her maternal responsibilities takes shape as positive, deliberate activity by means of which she sought to live out the ideal of spiritual abandonment. In abandoning Claude for religious life (and in discursively representing the event as, precisely, “abandonment”) Marie transposes the spiritual norm of abandonment to the register of the maternal, adopting and adapting it to the particularities of her experience as a mother and mystic in a Catholic France saturated with theologies of self-annihilation, abnegation, and holy indifference.²⁵ Viewing Marie de l’Incarnation and the abandonment through the lens provided by Mahmood’s study allows us to see how Marie’s decision to relinquish her son was one forged not in total submission to social (or, again, divine) norms nor in simple resistance to them. Rather, filtered through the conceptual glass of “the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms,” the abandonment comes into focus as “a mode of discursive engagement” with the norms of obedience and spiritual abandonment—norms that give “the very ground though which [Marie’s] subjectivity and self-understanding . . . are constituted.”²⁶

Proposing a subject fashioned not in agonistic struggle against society but in creative collaboration with society, Mahmood effectively dismantles the crabbed binary that would limit the possibilities for meaningful action to domination and resistance. Mahmood’s refigured subject pushes against the Cartesian model of human subjectivity, begging us to recognize the ways in which the end of self-fashioning is not always tethered to the end of autonomy. And yet, Mahmood’s critique of Cartesian subjectivity remains incomplete. Forged in relationship with society, Mahmood’s subject is nevertheless separate from society.

As a way of nourishing Mahmood’s embryonic critique of the Cartesian subject and proposing a richer and more productive way of thinking about agency, I want to turn to Ben Morgan’s *On Becoming God*. In this book, Morgan begins with an early fourteenth-century text written by a woman known as Sister Catherine who declares that she has “become God.”²⁷ For Morgan, Sister Catherine’s declaration beguiles because it confounds the modern understanding of the subject as fixed, autonomous, and eminently rational. Sister Catherine’s text—like those of her contemporary Meister Eckhart—suggests a radically different model of the subject, one that strives to overcome personal desires and idiosyncratic tendencies with the aim of con-

²⁴ Fénelon, *Selected Writings*, 275.

²⁵ For a more thorough discussion of the spiritual dimensions of the notion of abandonment in seventeenth-century France, see Dunn, *The Cruellest of All Mothers*, 98–123.

²⁶ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 15, 115.

²⁷ Ben Morgan, *On Becoming God: Late Medieval Mysticism and the Modern Western Self* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 1.

forming to the divine archetype. Sister Catherine and her mystical contemporaries—in contrast to their modern, Western counterparts—do not seek to hone the edges of their individual identities, rendering them ever more distinct (and personally expressive) against the grain of religion and culture, but rather to dull the differences between their own identities and God’s identity as articulated and defined for them by their religion and culture.

It is this markedly different understanding of the human subject that moves Morgan to reconsider modern Western conceptions of selfhood and to think critically about just what we might be missing—about both medieval mystics and ourselves—by hewing too closely to the model of the self-aware and separate subject. Drawing on the insights of Martin Heidegger, Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and others, Morgan makes the claim that we are, at bottom, irreducibly intersubjective creatures. Individual identity is not, as Descartes and his heirs supposed, forged in isolation from and in antagonism with the social world, but is instead “a way of coping with being delivered up to a shared world.”²⁸

Up to this point, what Morgan offers as a corrective to the rigidly Cartesian model of the subject complements Mahmood’s work. Morgan, however, goes further. It is not enough, Morgan contends, to gesture to the ways in which subjects draw on social norms to shape both their cultural and physical selves. We must work to bridge the gap between self and society, disabusing ourselves of the presumption of a primary separation between the two and attending to the ways in which we are constituted not just by others but with others—others who are operating not just on us but in us in ways that reveal just how porous the boundary really is between self and other, subject and object. The party, Morgan reminds us, “has always started before we show up . . . and it’s at the party that we get to know ourselves.”²⁹

Morgan’s point is that we humans are, and always have been, relational creatures molded within the thick contexts of our social worlds. In search of resources for thinking through this essential intersubjectivity—in search of tools with which to write not the history of techniques of the self (*à la* Mahmood) but the history of techniques of coexistence—Morgan turns to medieval Christian mystics. For Morgan, the writings of figures like Sister Catherine and Meister Eckhart offer a route out of the impasse created by our preoccupation with the Cartesian subject, jogging our memories of the ways in which human subjectivity was differently imagined in the historical past and inviting us to consider alternative models of human subjectivity in the contemporary present. In lieu of the fixed and autonomous subject of the post-Cartesian West, Eckhart’s writings suggest a dynamic and dependent subject, one oriented teleologically toward self-abandonment and ultimate identity with God. And yet, for all Eckhart’s emphasis on the subordi-

²⁸ Ibid., 218.

²⁹ Ibid., 80.

nation of the human subject to the divine other, sensitivity toward the self is not altogether absent from his writings. There is in Eckhart's texts, Morgan notes, a paradoxical conjunction of the twin mandates of self-examination and self-abandonment. As much as it is not the uncontested master of the social world, Eckhart's subject is at the same time not absolutely mastered by the social world, taking shape instead somewhere in between these two poles in an ongoing process of negotiating the ineluctable human condition of togetherness. Eckhart's lesson, Morgan concludes, is that any history of the human subject must "include the whole hyphenated compound . . . : being-delivered-up-to-the-world-and-others-and-available-to-oneself-in-life's-unfolding."³⁰

What might we be able to learn about Marie de l'Incarnation and the abandonment if we imported into our analysis an understanding of the subject founded on intersubjectivity, relationality, and the ineluctable human condition of togetherness? What would the abandonment look like if we began from the foundation of Marie de l'Incarnation as a relational subject, a subject forged not just by techniques of the self rooted in social norms but by techniques of coexistence developed in response to a shared social world that precedes the subject and summons it into existence?

To begin with, Morgan's attention to the condition of "being together in the world" as the foundation of human subjectivity illuminates the dynamic of encounter and response that structures so much of the life history Marie reports in the *Relations* of 1633 and 1654. It was, after all, in response to a dramatic vision of the crucified Christ in 1620 that Marie experienced what she would later identify as the moment of her conversion. Startled one morning on the way to work by a vivid encounter with the crucified Christ, Marie found herself overcome with an acute awareness of her own guilt before God. "In a moment," she writes, "the eyes of my mind were opened and all the faults, sins, imperfections I had ever committed were represented to me both in general and in detail, with a distinction and a clarity more certain than any certitude that human effort could express." At this moment, Marie saw herself "completely submerged in blood, and I was convinced that this blood was that of the Son of God and that I was responsible for its shedding because of all the sins which had been shown to me, and that this precious blood had been spilled out for my salvation." It would take, however, not just Marie's encounter with the envisioned Christ to effect her conversion, but the collaboration of a Feuillantine priest to whom Marie turned to confess "all the sins which had been shown to me."³¹ Marie's enduring sense of herself as an abject sinner, guilty of having offended Christ and beholden to him for his sacrificial intervention required, in other words, not just personal reflection on and engagement with the norms of early modern Cathol-

³⁰ Ibid., 80.

³¹ Martin, *Vie*, 26.

icism but literal encounter twice over with others both human and divine, together with and in response to whom Marie worked out the dimensions of her own subjectivity.

Marie's experience in colonial New France throws into even starker relief what Morgan proposes about the "we-relationship" at the heart of human existence.³² In Morgan's terms, Marie's understanding of her vocation and, indeed, her identity as a Catholic woman religious in the New World depended on negotiating the facts of togetherness with an Amerindian population that preceded her and, in a very real sense, summoned her into existence. Beyond the simpler point that Marie's identity as a missionary called to evangelize and educate depended on the presence of indigenous girls in the nascent colony, Morgan's attention to the fundamental condition of intersubjectivity encourages us to see how Marie adapts and adjust to the unanticipated realities of a place and a people that confronted her and demanded her response. Having arrived in the colony in 1639 an eager young idealist confident in her ability to at once Christianize and at the same time "Frenchify" Amerindian girls, Marie had become by the end of her life a seasoned—and more tolerant—realist who understood that conversion to Christianity did not require the adoption of French cultural habits. If it is impossible, in the end, to imagine Marie without New France and her Amerindian pupils, that is because (as Morgan's project implies) Marie is not without New France and her Amerindian pupils. There is, between Marie and those others with whom she lived and worked, a porousness that belies the Cartesian conviction of isolated subjectivity.

Morgan's refiguring of the subject as relational, as constituted not just by but with others, has significant implications for thinking about the abandonment and the attendant questions of agency with which I began this article. Both the event of the abandonment itself and its later discursive representations in Marie's *Relations*, her letters to Claude, and in Claude's own *Vie de la vénérable mère Marie de l'Incarnation* lend themselves to a rich re-reading through Morgan's hermeneutic. To begin with, the abandonment itself was, of course, only possible because Marie had, eleven years earlier, given birth to a son whose existence enabled her own subjectivity as a mother. What's more, the precise dimensions of the mother-son relationship in seventeenth-century France (in all its complexities) and Marie's repeated affirmations of her ardent and sincerely felt fondness for her son "whom I loved a lot" colluded to tinge the abandonment with a particular pathos and to render the event an especially potent expression of the subordination of Marie's own will to divine providence.³³ Marie's subjectivity as the abandoning mother was one forged in the company of Claude—dependent upon Claude, the natural affection between them, and the particular power

³² Morgan, *On Becoming God*, 2.

³³ Marie de l'Incarnation, *Relation de 1633*, 271. For a discussion of motherhood in seventeenth-century France, see Dunn, *The Cruellest of All Mothers*, 47–70.

of maternal renunciation as a symbol of the spiritual virtue of abandonment.

Just as importantly, Morgan's insights help us to see Marie and Claude's repeated—almost obsessive—return to the abandonment in their correspondence and written works as a way of “negotiating togetherness.”³⁴ As dramatic as Marie's maternal leave-taking was, her entry into religious life did not spell estrangement from her son. Rather, even (and especially) after Marie left for Canada in 1641, the relationship between mother and son flourished through the medium of the written word. Not only did Marie and Claude exchange letters regularly across the Atlantic for some thirty-one years until Marie's death in 1672, but Marie eventually agreed to compose and send Claude her spiritual autobiography, the *Relation* of 1654. In exchange for granting her son intimate access to the secrets of her soul, Marie demanded Claude's assent to the condition of secrecy. The *Relation*, Marie insisted in a letter accompanying the text in 1654, was for Claude's eyes only. “I trust,” she cautioned her son, “that you will keep the fidelity for which I am asking and that after I granted you what you asked of me, you will not refuse me what I desire of you.”³⁵ In direct contravention of his mother's request Claude published the *Relation* in its entirety in 1677, heavily edited and supplemented with additions culled from his own memory, under the title *Vie de la vénérable mère Marie de l'Incarnation*. Indeed, so closely twined together are the voices of mother and son in this collaborative project that it amounts to the work of two authors—intersubjectivity in a discursive key.

The abandonment emerges as a key theme in the correspondence between mother and son as well as in the *Relation* of 1654 and the *Vie*. If Marie returned repeatedly to the event in an attempt to justify her decision and obtain absolution from the abandoned son himself, pleading with Claude to acknowledge the abandonment as the primary (and necessary) cause of his spiritual accomplishments, Claude appealed to the abandonment as the currency by means of which he ransomed his mother's spiritual writings. Writing to Claude in 1654, Marie recalls the various means Claude employed to extract from his mother “an account of the operations that it pleased the Divine Majesty to carry out on me,” one of the most persuasive of which seems to have been Claude's appeal to his mother's memory of the abandonment.³⁶

³⁴ Morgan, *On Becoming God*, 218.

³⁵ Marie de l'Incarnation, “Lettre CLXII,” in Oury, *Correspondance*, 548.

³⁶ Marie de l'Incarnation, “Lettre CLV,” in Oury, *Correspondance*, 525. In this same letter Marie continues, “You beseeched me anew by means of the most insistent motives and the most touching reasons that your intellect could supply, accusing me of a lack of affection and testifying to me that I had abandoned you so young, such that you scarcely knew your mother; that not content with this first abandonment, I had departed from France and left you forever; that when you were a child you were not capable of the instructions I gave you, and that since you are of a more enlightened age today, I must not refuse you the lights God had communicated to me.”

It is in the *Relation* of 1654 that Marie most fully develops the sacrificial interpretation of the abandonment with which I began this article. There, in the context of a passage in which she admits to having second thoughts about leaving Claude for religious life, Marie boldly declares the abandonment itself nothing short of a sacrifice: “I loved my son with a very great love,” she insists, “and leaving him constituted my sacrifice.”³⁷ Carried out against her own inclinations and against the powerful pull of her natural affections for Claude, the abandonment as Marie represents it in the *Relation* of 1654 was an act performed in submission to God’s will. Taking his mother’s cue, Claude develops the sacrificial reading of the abandonment in the *Vie*, finding precedent for what Marie had done in the model of Abraham. Identifying himself as “an Isaac, an only child, whom God gave to [Marie] in order to test her faith and her love,” Claude compares Marie to Abraham, insisting that in both cases, God provided the strength and courage to sacrifice the beloved child against reason, natural law, and ecclesiastical norms.³⁸ His mother, Claude insists, abandoned her son, her only son, whom she loved, not on account of personal desire or even indifference, but against the inclinations of natural affections no less powerful than those of Abraham himself.

Although a thorough analysis of the ways in which Marie and Claude treat the abandonment merits more than I can give it here, suffice it to say that for both mother and son writing about the abandonment was, in Morgan’s terms, a technique of coexistence. In colluding to represent the abandonment in no uncertain terms as a sacrifice performed in imitation of Christ and in submission to the uncompromising will of God, Marie and Claude together worked out the dimensions of who they were in relation to each other, negotiating the memories of their shared past and writing the possibilities of their allied futures. Marie, like Claude, forced to acquiesce to a demanding God who was “unmoved by the tender feelings I had for you,” takes her place alongside Claude as the reluctant victim of maternal sacrifice. Like Claude, Marie resisted the abandonment; like Claude, Marie grieved over the separation; like Claude, Marie was a victim of God’s unyielding command. Discursively refashioned, the abandonment was not, as the witnessing public may have suspected, an injury inflicted by an indifferent mother on her unloved son, but the result of the imposition of divine will on a resistant mother and her beloved son—the double victims of a sacrifice of biblical proportions.

* * *

I want to return now to the question with which I began this article: what do we do with the vexing question of agency as it applies to the case of Marie

³⁷ Marie de l’Incarnation, *Relation de 1654*, vol. 2 of *Marie de l’Incarnation: Écrits spirituels et historiques*, ed. Marie de l’Incarnation (Paris: Desclée-de Brouwer, 1929), 273.

³⁸ Martin, *Vie*, 171.

de l'Incarnation and the abandonment? If, as I argued above, limiting the abandonment to the double possibilities of domination and resistance fails to do justice to the abandonment in its complexity, how can we bring ourselves to think more capaciously about agency in ways that illuminate the nuances of human activity in the world—in this case, Marie de l'Incarnation's decision to abandon her son in favor of religious life among the Ursulines?

Taking Mahmood's intervention in conversations about agency as my point of departure, I suggested that a more sensitive treatment of agency depends upon a refiguring of the human subject. Substituting for the subject forged in struggle against society one forged in collaboration with society, Mahmood provides us tools for thinking about agency as more than a zero-sum game, beyond the binary of domination (society's gain, the subject's loss) and resistance (the subject's gain, society's loss). Applied to the case of Marie de l'Incarnation, Mahmood's frame of analysis encourages us to make sense of the abandonment as a technique of the self—a concrete means by which Marie, in the specificity of her circumstances as a mystic and mother in seventeenth-century France, engaged in the project of self-fashioning in collaboration with the norm of Christian obedience and the spiritual ideal of abandonment.

What Morgan's insistence on the essential intersubjectivity of human existence adds to Mahmood's treatment of agency, however, is a sensitivity to the ways in which action is perhaps most productively understood not as belonging to a single subject but rather shared, or fractured, between a multiplicity of mutually dependent subjects constituted in dynamic relation to each other. Like Mahmood's, Morgan's work encourages us to think about the abandonment more broadly than the binary of domination and resistance permits. But Morgan extends and elaborates on Mahmood's incipient critique of the Cartesian subject that undergirds traditional conceptions of agency, pushing us to rethink agency as neither the subject's struggle against social norms and ideals nor even the subject's collaboration with them. Morgan's hermeneutic shifts the focus on the abandonment from a technique of the self to a technique of coexistence, the product of activity shared between mother and son struggling to negotiate the ineluctable facts of their togetherness.

Morgan's attention to the analytical foundation of the "we-relationship" (as opposed to the Cartesian *cogito*) in our queries about human agency invites us to reconsider the abandonment as the outcome of an agency fractured between mother and son.³⁹ Substituting the intersubjectivity between mother and son for Marie's own subjectivity liberates us from reading the abandonment as belonging to Marie alone and, consequently, from interpreting the event as either Marie's domination by divine command or Marie's resistance to cultural norms. Instead, beginning our analysis from the

³⁹ Morgan, *On Becoming God*, 2.

bedrock of a fundamental porousness between self and other allows us to see the abandonment—and all instances of human agency—as a joint operation, the activity of a subject undecidable between self and other, subject and object, the “very embodiment of alterity-within.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Kelly Oliver, “Introduction: Julia Kristeva’s Outlaw Ethics,” in *Ethics, Politics, and Difference in Julia Kristeva’s Writing*, ed. Kelly Oliver (New York: Routledge, 1993), 4. Kristeva’s work, like Morgan’s, powerfully challenges the model of the Cartesian subject. For Kristeva, it is the maternal body that provides the “most obvious example” of a human subjectivity refigured on a relational grid. Like the pregnant mother who does not just “love the other as himself,” but “love[s] the other in herself,” all humans are subjects-in-process, ebbing and flowing across the porous boundary that would separate—but in vain—the self from the others around it. Kelly Oliver, ed., *The Portable Kristeva* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 17, 298.

The Early Discourses of the Buddha as Literature: Narrative Features of the *Dīgha Nikāya**

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The question regarding the literary character of religious scripture in Judaism and Christianity has received elaborate and intense scholarly consideration. Not only does the literary approach to the Bible and the New Testament have a history of a few hundred—some would say a few thousand—years, many histories of these modes of interpretation have been published.¹ There is today a well-established consensus in respectable scholarly circles that the Bible and the Gospels can and should be read as literature.² Robert Alter and

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¹ See the opening remarks of Adele Berlin, *Biblical Poetry through Medieval Jewish Eyes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 3: “Modern biblical and literary scholars sometimes give the impression that they are the first to approach the bible from a literary perspective, but in reality the literary study of the Bible is one of the most ancient methods of understanding the biblical text. To be sure, the literary approach was eclipsed during the last century by the historical approach, and has only recently come back into its own. But this is all the more reason to be aware of its antecedents.” There are many histories of the literary approach to the bible and to strategies of biblical interpretation; among these, see David Norton, *A History of the Bible as Literature*, vols. 1–2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

² Generally speaking, the study of the Qur’ān as literature is less developed than in that of its sister monotheistic traditions, yet in the inquiry into the literary sources of the Qur’ān there has been more progress. A number of articles in Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, eds., *The Qur’ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur’ānic Milieu* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) expose the relevance of local literary traditions for understanding Qur’ānic speech; see especially the study by Thomas Bauer on Arab poetry of the time (“The Relevance of Early Arabic Poetry for Qur’anic Studies including Observations on *Kull* and on Q 22:27, 26:225, and 52:31” [699–732]); the essay by Islam Dayeh on the oral dimensions of the Qur’ān and its use of oral formulas (“Al-Hawāmīm: Intertextuality and Coherence in Meccan Surahs” [461–98]); Michael Marx’s contribution on the reworking of earlier Arab traditions, in this case through its appropriation of the figure of Mary (“Glimpses of a Mariology in the Qur’an: From Hagiography to Theology via Religious-Political Debate” [533–63]); see also the introduction by Sinai and Neuwirth (1–24). Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur’ān and Its Biblical Subtext* (London: Routledge, 2010) has discussed the relevance of Biblical literature for understanding the Qur’ān.

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Meir Sternberg, for example, each speak about the relation between the historical and the literary in the Bible; although both agree that the aim of the text is historiographic, they recognize that the manner in which the Bible approaches its subject matter involves conscious application of narrative considerations.

For Sternberg, historiography mediates between ideology and aesthetics.³ Alter speaks of fiction as the principal means for realizing history; the Bible is “an imaginative reenactment of history by a gifted writer” who interweaves fact and legend. According to Alter, “what the close reading of the text does suggest . . . is that the writer could manipulate his inherited materials with sufficient freedom and sufficient firmness of authorial purpose to define motives, relations, and unfolding themes, even in a primeval history, with the kind of subtle cogency we associate with the conscious artistry of the narrative mode designated prose fiction.”⁴ Similarly, Hans Frei states, “By speaking of the narrative shape of these accounts, I suggest that what they are about and how they make sense are functions of the depiction or narrative rendering of the events constituting them—including their being rendered, at least partially, by the device of chronological sequence. The claim, for example, that the gospel story is about Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah means that it narrates the way his status came to be enacted.”⁵

These statements submit claims that are remarkably strong. In the first, Alter speaks of how an author manipulates the materials we find in the Bible; in the second, Frei speaks of the very chronological arrangement of a story as an function of “narrative.” Other studies emphasize different literary dimensions of holy scripture. Certain authors have focused on the local literary and mythical traditions that have informed the compositions of biblical narrative;⁶ among these are Northrop Frye, who exposed the mythological patterns that are at the root of biblical imagination. Frye also discussed the richness and poetic features of biblical language.⁷ In a similar vein, Ste-

³ Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), esp. chap. 1. Alter and Sternberg hold numerous debates between them, but from the point of view of the present study their approaches have much in common.

⁴ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 32. For further discussion of the relation between history and fiction, see Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (1982; San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1983), 39–50; Ilana Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 8; Frank Kermode, *Poetry, Narrative, History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 49–67.

⁵ Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 13.

⁶ See, e.g., David E. Aune, ed., *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1989); and Amos Niven Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Bible*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); Ute E. Eisen, “The Narratological Fabric of the Gospels,” in *Narratology Beyond Literary Criticism: Mediality, Disciplinarity*, ed. Jan Christoph Meister (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), further discuss aspects of narrative in the New Testament.

⁷ Northrop Frye, *The Great Code*, chap. 1, and *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of “The Bible and Literature”* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990).

phen Prickett draws attention to the evocative language of the Bible, whose words are impregnated with ambiguity, obscurity, and complexity; attempts at translation easily flatten out into univocal, overly clear meanings.⁸ Echoing these insights, Frank Kermode sees scripture as indefinitely deep and packed with interpretation, some of which is concealed and accessible only to the blessed few.⁹ Earlier, Kermode spoke of the continuities between the different ways human beings attempt to make sense of the world, so that the religious, philosophical, scientific, and literary overlap each other. For Kermode, the imaginary is the very condition of any sense of order.¹⁰

These are only a few examples of a thriving field of research that concerns the holy texts of the Jewish and Christian traditions. I allude to these positions mainly in order to point out the anomaly that very little has been written from this perspective in the study of Buddhism. Interestingly, regarding the Hindu traditions the situation is quite different.¹¹ Perhaps this lacuna results from the lack of pretension regarding the transcendent origin of scripture in Buddhism,¹² which makes the claim in favor of the literary aspect of the texts seem self-evident. Sheldon Pollock has shown that in scholarly discussion of Indian literature, the meaning of literature is normally taken for granted, referring only to a body of texts.¹³ The same is true regarding presentations of Buddhist Pāli literature—most studies on the early discourses attributed to the Buddha ignore their literary dimensions, taking them as

⁸ Stephen Prickett, *Words and the Word: Language, Poetics and Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁹ Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

¹⁰ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967): "It is not that we are connoisseurs of chaos, but that we are surrounded by it, and equipped for co-existence with it only by our fictive powers" (64).

¹¹ For treatment of the Upaniṣads as literature, see Patrick Olivelle, "Young Śvetaketu: A Literary Study of an Upaniṣadic Story," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119, no. 1 (1999): 46–70; Yohanan Grinshpon, *Crisis and Knowledge: The Upanishadic Experience and Storytelling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Brian Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India: Priest, Kings, and Women in the Early Upaniṣads* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007). The treatment of the Veda as poetry has a long history. The literary aspects of the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahābhārata* are evident and have received considerable scholarly attention. See, e.g., Paula Richman, ed., *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia* (1991; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), and especially the classic article in this volume by Ramanujan, "Three Hundred Rāmāyaṇas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation" (22–49). See also Phillip Lutgendorf, *The Life of a Text: Performing the "Rāmcaritmānas" of Tulsidas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

¹² Although consciously and explicitly Buddhists admit the human origin of their scriptures, the claim could be made that early Buddhist texts rely on a similar type of authority as Vedic revelation, for example, through the establishment of an oral tradition of recitation. For studies that work in this direction, see Donald S. Lopez, "Authority and Orality in the Mahāyāna," *Numen* 42 (1995): 21–47, and *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sūtra* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), chap. 1; and Natalie Gummer, "Sacrificial Sūtras: Mahāyāna Literature and the South Asian Ritual Cosmos," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82, no. 4 (2014): 1091–1126.

¹³ See Sheldon Pollock, introduction to *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

preservations of historical teachings that may reach us after many developments and interventions but that were nonetheless produced straightforwardly in order to teach and inform.¹⁴ The critical question that has troubled scholars in relation to these texts is in what way they go back to the Buddha and how reliable or authentic they are from a historical point of view. Yet although important in its own right, this discussion implicitly assumes that the main impulse of early Buddhist textuality is in preservation, which leaves little room to appreciate the creative drives involved in the formation of Buddhist scripture and in the very idea of *Buddha-vacana* (the word of the Buddha).¹⁵ In order to obtain an improved grasp of what text *was* for the early Buddhists and what their textual practices included, we must begin to ask new types of questions—what *are* the texts, what are their goals and methods, and what are they trying *to do*? Here it is valuable to perceive the literary quality of the early discourses, their narrative strategy and design, and their techniques of storytelling.¹⁶ Following Pollock, we may ask

¹⁴ In studies of “Pāli Literature,” although the meaning of the term *Pāli* is given elaborate treatment, the meaning of the term “literature” is rarely discussed. See, e.g., Bimala Churn Law, *A History of Pāli Literature* (1933; Varanasi: Indica, 2000); Wilhelm Geiger, *Pāli Literature and Language* (1916; New Delhi: Munishram Manoharlal, 1978); Kenneth Roy Norman, *Pāli Literature: Including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of All the Hinayāna Schools of Buddhism* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983); and Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (Delhi: Munishram Manoharlal, 1996).

¹⁵ Numerous scholars have addressed the flexibility of the understanding of *Buddha-vacana*. See, e.g., Graham MacQueen, “Inspired Speech in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism I,” *Religion* 11 (1981): 303–19, esp. 303–10; James P. McDermott, “Scripture as the Word of the Buddha,” *Numen* 31 (1984): 36; Ronald M. Davidson, “An Introduction to the Standards of Scriptural Authenticity in Indian Buddhism,” in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990), 291–325; Lopez, “Authority and Orality,” 27; Peter Skilling, “Redaction, Recitation, and Writing: Transmission of the Buddha’s Teaching in Indian in the Early Period,” in *Buddhist Manuscript Cultures: Knowledge, Ritual, and Art*, ed. Stephen C. Berkwitz, Juliane Schober, and Claudia Brown (London: Routledge, 2009), 53–75, and “Scriptural Authenticity and the Śrāvaka Schools: An Essay toward an Indian Perspective,” *Eastern Buddhist* 41, no. 2 (2010): 1–47; Bhikkhu Anālayo, *The Dawn of Abhidharma* (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2014), 148. Here I do not wish to enter a discussion of the precise nature of this term but use it to refer broadly to authoritative Buddhist scripture.

¹⁶ Among the studies that acknowledge that Buddhist texts can and should be treated as literature are Graham MacQueen, *A Study of the Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988); Joy Maneé, “Categories of Sutta in the Pāli Nikāyas and Their Implications for our Appreciation of the Buddhist Teaching and Literature,” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 (1990): 29–87, and “On the Departure Formula and Its Translation,” *Buddhist Studies Review* 10, no. 1 (1993): 27–43; Brian Black, “Rivals and Benefactors: Encounters between Buddhists and Brahmins in the Nikāyas,” *Religions of South Asia* 3, no. 1 (2009): 25–43, and “Ambaṭṭha and Śvetaketu: Literary Connections between the Upaniṣads and Early Buddhist Narratives,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 1 (2011): 136–61; and Sara L. McClintock, “Compassionate Trickster: The Buddha as a Literary Figure in the Narratives of Early Indian Buddhism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 1 (2011): 90–122. M. Winternitz (*A History of Indian Literature*, vol. 2 [1933; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983]) is also sensitive to the literary quality of the texts. The recent volume edited by Brian Black and Laurie Patton, *Dialogue in Early South Asian Religions: Hindu, Buddhist and Jain Traditions* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), attests that the tides may be shifting. Steven Collins (*Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], and *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995]) approaches

“what the texts of South Asia meant to the people who wrote, heard, saw, or read them, and how these meanings have changed over time.”¹⁷ When we take the texts as a whole and observe their literary dimensions, rather than view them as fragmented due to historical processes, we gain insights into what is possibly most interesting from a historical perspective, that is, what these people thought their religion was about.

In speaking of literature in this context I mean first and foremost that, like in the quotes from Alter and Frei above, there is a presence of an author in the texts. The early Buddhist discourses are supposedly narrated by an all-knowing authorial voice that has complete grasp of the events and ideas under discussion. As has been shown in a rich and perhaps incontestable manner by Wayne Booth in his 1961 classic *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, the existence of an author involves inevitable application of choices and evaluations in relation to the materials he or she presents, so that the author is constantly manipulating the story and shaping it according to a specific rhetoric. Rhetoric relates to the very possibility of coherence in narrative and grants the text logic and direction. An author shares with the audience a set of expectations, values, and assumptions, so that all are implicated with the same impartiality. No author can choose to avoid rhetoric. One of the places the author reveals that he is involved in a form of artifice is when he tells us things there is no possible way for him to know, for example, when he relates personal experiences from a character’s subjective point of view.¹⁸ When we

Buddhist thought with the understanding that there are literary dimensions to the early teachings. Some steps in the direction of understanding early Buddhist texts as literature have been taken by Ralph Flores in *Buddhist Scriptures as Literature: Sacred Rhetoric and the Uses of Theory* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008). Although touching upon many interesting themes, Flores does not engage comprehensively with any one of them and offers no direct discussion of Pāli sources. Luis Gómez (“On Reading Literature Literally: Concrete Imagery before Doctrine,” 2011 *BARC International Symposium*, Series 1: Special International Symposium on Pure Land Buddhism [Kyoto: Ryukoku University Research Center for Buddhist Cultures in Asia, 2012], 5–33) has produced a valuable contribution in this regard that relates to Mahāyāna materials, many of whose conclusions are relevant to the earlier texts we discuss here; see also Luis O. Gómez, “On Buddhist Wonders and Wonder-Working,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 2010 (2011): 513–54. In the broader, Mahāyāna context, see also Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); and Alan Cole, *Text as Father: Paternal Seduction in Early Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁷ See the introduction to Sheldon Pollock, ed., *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1–36, esp. 14. The difference between the materials treated here and those Pollock is most interested in concerns the evident religious nature of the early Buddhist discourses. Among the other contributions to the same volume, Steven Collins focuses on Buddhist literary culture in a more secular sense (“What Is Literature in Pāli?,” 649–88); Velcheru Narayana Rao’s illuminating article on Telugu literature demonstrates the shifting boundaries between religious and secular traditions in India (“Multiple Literary Cultures in Telugu: Court, Temple, and Public,” 383–436); on this theme, see also Charles Hallisey’s contribution to the same volume, which is more directly related to the Buddhist context (“Works and Persons in Sinhala Literary Culture,” 689–746, esp. 700–707).

¹⁸ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) opens his study by making this point in relation to the workings of the author in Job.

recall the Buddhist texts' presumption to transmit the Buddha's very experiences of awakening, which are said to take place in deep meditative states,¹⁹ we can easily pick up on the relevance of Booth's perspective to Buddhist textuality.

In speaking of the presence of an author in the early Buddhist texts, I do not mean that there was a specific person who composed them but, rather, something more in line with what Michel Foucault termed the "author function."²⁰ In this sense it is important to acknowledge that the early Buddhist discourses are related from a specific point of view and that the positioning and rehearsal of this point of view is one of the main functions of Buddhist textuality.²¹ This perspective, shared by authors, transmitters, and audiences, sees the Buddha as the most precious element in the universe, whose being is pervaded by and whose words reveal the full, ultimate truth about humanity and reality. The truths these texts reveal are no less poetic than historical; the audience is invited to participate in the associative and subjective power of the story, just as much as they are meant to learn about concrete realistic events.²² The positioning of the Buddha as a superhuman hero is done through diverse narrative methods, which include taking the representation of his teachings as an unquestionable truth and the application of rhetoric to the narrative so that the telling of the story has this idea in mind. For example, the orientation of all other characters in the discourses—monks, Brahmins, rival ascetic teachers, kings, gods, and laymen—revolves around the Buddha. All are his inferiors, and a main goal of the narrative is to bring this idea to light. In literary criticism, narrative most commonly refers to the sequential relation of events.²³ The events to be treated—their very abstraction and definition, and then their connection according to a logical temporal sequence—are all in themselves a part of the manipulation effected by author.²⁴

¹⁹ See, e.g., *Majjhima Nikāya* (Collection of middle length discourses; hereafter MN) 1.21–23.

²⁰ Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology, Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (1969; New York: New Press, 1998, 211).

²¹ Different concepts have been used in order to analyze the working of what I call here the author function. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg (*The Nature of Narrative* [New York: Oxford: University Press, 1966], chap. 7) are among those who prefer "point of view," emphasizing the irony in the coexistence of story and storyteller. Eventually the concept of focalization became the dominant way to relate to this aspect of narratology, which speaks of the perspective from which events of the story are told. I hope to devote a future study to focalization in Buddhist narrative.

²² I speak of poetic truth in the sense discussed by Robin Skelton, *Poetic Truth* (London: Barnes & Noble; Agincourt: Book Society of Canada, 1978).

²³ See, e.g., Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin: Mouton, 1982), 1; Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1982), 2; in Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), this relates to the level of the "story."

²⁴ Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1981): 5–27; Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), esp. 70–75; Richard Walsh, *The Rhetoric of Fictionality: Narrative Fictionality and the*

It is important to emphasize that in importing theories of literary criticism that employ terms such as “manipulation” and “artifice,” I do not mean to imply that the texts are insincere. Rather, the idea is that the texts are no less an illustration or a teasing out of the perspective from which they are being told than an attempt to relate specific events or ideas. The point is perhaps too obvious to be stated, but, nonetheless, Buddhist texts are about the Buddha. They visualize and idealize him before they try to relate his true historical life events; they assume that what he taught was the whole of the truth prior to articulating it; they are more about hagiography than about biography. When we look at Buddhist narratives in the early suttas not as a mere conventionalized framing of the Buddha’s teachings, but as part of the very message of the texts, we begin to perceive that when certain people exhibit a deferential attitude to the Buddha, this is an important value for Buddhist textuality that is a central part of the message of the texts. When all students and audiences treat him as a superior and speak to him accordingly, this is not accidental but an essential part of the narrative. Buddhist texts are thus also pictures of the Buddha and include an aspect of visualization; they are continuous to, and even participate in, the traditional meditative practice of *Buddha-anusmṛti*, “mindfulness of the Buddha” or “commemoration of the Buddha.”²⁵ Early Buddhist texts are about the Buddha, not as a historical figure but as an ideal type, as a unique cosmic being whose nature is more than natural. They are about imagining the Buddha, harboring him in one’s heart, engaging with his being (and through this with his teaching), and reflecting on his character. As such, the discourses are not only informational but also possess clear aesthetic sides. From this point of view, the Buddha’s historical and doctrinal materials serve narrative purposes that are no less important than their explicit content.

The present contribution to the study of early Buddhist literature is not offered as a comprehensive overview of a new approach to early Buddhist texts as literature. Rather, it has the more modest goal of making such a claim regarding a particular body of texts, the *Sīla-kkhandā-vagga* (Section on morality; cited hereafter as SKV), which comprises the first recitation section of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (The long discourses [of the Buddha]; hereafter

Idea of Fiction (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007). These authors stress the idea of fictionality in relation to narrative. In this context it is also interesting to note the discussion of fairy tales in Jack Zipes, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1999), esp. 5–6, and their effort “to awaken our regard for the miraculous condition of life and to evoke in a religious sense profound feelings of awe and respect for life as a miraculous process” (5). These ideas obviously relate to certain function of Buddhist narrative.

²⁵ On *Buddha-anusmṛti*, see Charles Hallisey, “Devotion in the Buddhist Literature of Medieval Sri Lanka” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1988), chap. 4; Paul Harrison, “Commemoration and Identification in *Buddhānusmṛti*,” in *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Jante Gyatso (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 215–38.

DN). The SKV is probably not the most striking example of the art of storytelling in the canon;²⁶ many discourses in the MN, for example, would stand out as good stories before the discourses of the SKV.²⁷ The SKV has been chosen precisely because its literary character is more modest and therefore less easy to identify. It is also a confined textual corpus, which will allow a more reliable statement about a full section of one of the Nikāyas. This is important so as to keep in mind the idea of the editing of the canon, which has yet to receive the attention it deserves.²⁸ Although I do submit that the main part of my conclusions can be generalized or applied to other parts of the *Sutta Piṭaka* (The basket of discourses—the collection of the Buddha’s discourses in the early canon),²⁹ particularly to the rest of the DN and to the MN,³⁰ a broader statement is difficult to make at this point. In order to make one, a more elaborate consideration of the different collections of discourses, as well as of the relations between and within them, is necessary.

²⁶ I use the concept of “storytelling,” without intending the full baggage of a traditional entertainment that is accompanied by moral and religious edification in an oral context. Although I believe that there were many more performative sides to early Buddhist texts than their joint recitation as fixed texts, I use the idea of storytelling here only as part of the claim that the early discourses are also stories and that the people who put these texts together therefore were in certain respects storytellers. For the idea of fixed recitation, see Mark Allon, *Style and Function, a Study of the Dominant Stylistic Features of the Prose Sections of Pāli Canonical Sutta Texts and their Mnemonic Function* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1997); Alexander Wynne, “The Oral Transmission of Early Buddhist Literature,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004): 97–127; Bhikkhu Anālayo, “The Vicissitudes of Memory and Early Buddhist Oral Transmission,” *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies* 5 (2009): 5–19. For the performative aspects of early Buddhist oral culture, see Lance Cousins, “Pali Oral Literature,” in *Buddhist Studies Ancient and Modern*, ed. Phillip Denwood and Alexander Pitiagorsky (London: Curzon, 1983), 1–11; Rupert Gethin, “The Matikas: Memorization, Mindfulness, and the List,” in *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Janet Gyatso (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 149–72; Eviatar Shulman, “Orality and Creativity in Early Buddhist Discourses,” in *The Language of the Sūtras*, by Luis O. Gómez and Natalie Gummer (Berkeley, CA: Mangalam Research Institute, forthcoming).

²⁷ Salient examples would be a number of the discourses in the *Rāja-vagga*, and primarily the *Ghatikāra*- (MN 81), *Ratthapāla*- (MN 82), and *Angulimāla*- (MN 86) *suttas*. Other genres of early Buddhist literature relate more easily to the art of storytelling, such as the *Athakathā* to the *Jātaka* verses or to the *Dhammapada*; see, e.g., Naomi Appleton, *Jātaka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism: Narrating the Bodhisatta Path* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), *Narrating Karma and Rebirth: Buddhist and Jain Multi-Life Stories* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²⁸ To take the DN as an example, we may consider the connecting links between the three sections of recitation that it contains: Are these related in any meaningful way? Is their grouping together mere chance, or does it relate only to the discourses being “long”? Similar problems arise regarding the grouping and ordering of the texts within each of the three divisions, as well as regarding the relations between the distinct Nikāyas. Ideas of this sort are rarely discussed.

²⁹ The idea of canonicity in Buddhism is not as strong as in the Judeo-Christian ones. For initial discussions, see Kenneth R. Norman, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism, the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai Lectures 1994* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1997), chap. 8; Oliver Freiburger, “The Buddhist Canon and the Canon of Buddhist Studies,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no. 2 (2004): 261–83.

³⁰ The *Udāna* is also a text that has much in common with the MN and DN, although it is not strictly classified among the “early discourses.”

The present study shows that these “discourses” were not just discrete entities that were grouped together according to their length, to be faithfully transmitted by professional reciters (*bhāṇakas*).³¹

Early Buddhist textual culture was an oral tradition that composed texts through the use of formulas. From the present perspective it is important to realize that formulas are not only a mnemonic, technological device but have literary features and serve poetic functions; they are like images in an image bank that can be applied and reapplied in designated contexts in order to reference certain ideas, emotions, and perceptions. A particularly interesting demonstration of this perspective on the early oral Buddhist formulas is the long formula that is repeated or adapted in all discourses of the SKV except the opening one, which I will call here the “SKV formula.” Later we will look at the way this formula, ostensibly a doctrinal encapsulation of the path, is applied and reapplied in the discourses of the collection in a way that highlights its narrative functions, so that these must be considered an essential part of their message. We begin our analysis with the opening discourses of the SKV in order to establish the main features of the narrative approach to the early suttas.

1. THE ART OF NARRATIVE IN THE *SĪLA-KKHANDHA-VAGGA*

The *Brahmajāla-sutta* (The discourse on the divine net; hereafter BJS), the opening discourse of the DN and the SKV—in fact, as the Pāli canon is arranged, it is the opening discourse of the *Sutta Piṭaka*—begins with a story. The Buddha is traveling with a large order of monks³² on the road between Nālanda and Rājagṛha. Behind the Buddhist crowd walks a wandering recluse (*paribbājaka*) named Suppiya together with his student Brahmadata, who are arguing as to whether the Buddha, his teaching (*dhamma*), and order (*saṅgha*) are worthy of praise or blame; Suppiya denigrates the Buddha-*dhamma-saṅgha*, while his student expresses respect. The Buddha’s followers find this strange, and when they gather toward morning for discussion they remark on how wonderful the Buddha is, as opposed to Suppiya and his disciple, who are in such disagreement. The Buddha knows of the monks’ discussion—there is an implicit reference here to his supernatural powers³³—and arrives at the gathering hall. After the monks update him regarding their

³¹ Regarding the *bhāṇakas*, see E. W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (Migoda: D. S. Puswella, 1946), 24–32; Norman, *Pali Literature*, 8–9; Lance S. Cousins, “The Early Development of Buddhist Literature and Language in India,” *Journal of the Oxford Center for Buddhist Studies* 5 (2013): 89–135.

³² In fact, the text speaks of “500 monks,” a common category for “a large crowd.” This in itself is a good demonstration of how realistic the authorial voice takes itself to be.

³³ This allusion is brought out in one version of the story, preserved in Chinese; see Bhikkhu Anālayo, “The *Brahmajāla* and the Early Buddhist Oral Tradition,” in *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2014* (Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, 2015), 79–94, 46.

talk, he gives them an inspiring instruction—they should remain unmoved by either praise or blame for him. If he is hailed, they should not be elated; if he is maligned, they should experience no dejection—with either response they would not be able to apprehend the statement clearly. Rather, they should only comprehend what is true or false in the description and plainly express it.

This elegant tale opens the BJS, which is considered one of the primary philosophical articulations of the early discourses. The discourse is most famous for its outline of sixty-two mistaken philosophical views, which the Buddha refutes in order to introduce his own philosophical, or perhaps antiphilosophical,³⁴ vision. The precise philosophical significance of the discourse is a topic for a separate discussion, but it may not raise much controversy to say that the sixty-two views ultimately reduce to the two fundamental “extreme” philosophical mistakes that the Buddha often warns against, those of *sassata* (eternalism, or essential identity that exists over time) and *uccheda* (annihilationism, or disjunction between successive elements).³⁵ These views all posit an essentialist or original element in man (and perhaps in the world), and certain views take such an element to be annihilated upon death. The relinquishing of the sixty-two views is connected to a positive identification of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (relativity, or conditioned arising),³⁶ a familiar philosophical move that delineates the early Buddhist middle way, which refutes essential identity by acknowledging conditionality. Understanding *paṭiccasamuppāda* allows the Buddha to exit conditionality and quit rebirth.

The introductory story of the BJS is best seen as a thematic representation of the theoretical position outlined by the discourse. This philosophical tale is particularly apt for the context, since it hints in a subtle, suggestive way at the emotional reality one may bring about through a good study of the discourse: if one penetrates the astute philosophy articulated by the BJS, he or she may obtain the ability to react with confident clarity and with no conditioned involvement when the Buddha, and by extension anyone or anything that is dear to him, is insulted or glorified. The opening story presents much of the counterintuitive philosophical insight in a clever and communicative way. Notice that the event narrated at the opening of the BJS may, for all we know, be a historical one: the Buddha probably traveled more than once on the road between Nālanda and Rājagṛha. Perhaps, on one occasion, he and his followers were tailed by a renunciate who argued with his

³⁴ The position can be thought to be antiphilosophical, since as the Buddhist understanding is often portrayed, supposedly no view can prevail.

³⁵ The classification made by the discourse itself is into views that rely on an early or a later limit (*pubbanta*, *aparanta*). This relates to the idea of an essential identity that exists over time (eternalism) and to the position that such an identity may have an end (annihilationism).

³⁶ *Paṭiccasammupāda* is introduced in the last part of the text (DN 1.39ff) both in order to explain the outcome of holding mistaken views and in order to characterize the Buddha's release.

student. Possibly, even, they disagreed on the value of the Buddha and his message and continued to noisily express their disagreement at the night camp. But even if all these elements emerge from a realistic historical memory, the way this memory is appropriated by the BJS is motivated by narrative concerns and by the image of the Buddha that the authors wished to generate.

The opening story of the BJS is not only an accessible rendering of a philosophical message but also serves the narrative function of structuring the discourse. Some may have noticed that the ideas expressed by the Buddha's students in the assembly hall are only dimly coherent: "It is amazing, friends, astonishing, how well the Lord, the arahant, the perfected-Buddha, who knows and sees, penetrates the diverse inclinations of living beings. But this wandering recluse Suppiya in many ways speaks negatively of the Buddha, the dhamma and the saṅgha, while his young student and follower Brahmadatta in many ways speaks positively of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. In a state of such evident conflict with each other, this couple of teacher and student follows the Buddha and the community of monks."³⁷ The idea the monks wish to hint at, perhaps, is that there is deep harmony between the Buddha and the Saṅgha, thanks to the Buddha's exceptional qualities. The relation of this to Suppiya and his student is, however, unclear. The reason for this discrepancy, I suggest, is that the monks themselves do not know how and for what to offer true praise of the Buddha. The effort of the Buddha in the discourse will thus be to remedy this deficiency in his assembly of followers.

The main body of the BJS is structured in a perplexing way. Supposedly, the text is about the Buddha's subtle philosophy, but this instruction is given as a demonstration of correct praise for the Buddha. After the opening story, Buddha proceeds to discuss the "trivial, worldly things connected with morality by which a simpleton would praise the *Tathāgata*."³⁸ This leads to an elaborate description of the Buddha's inspiring ethical behavior—he never hurts other living beings, never lies or speaks maliciously, and so on—things for which one may offer insignificant and misdirected praise. After three long sections on the Buddha's morality, which include some rather bizarre characterizations,³⁹ the Buddha introduces "the other, deep things, difficult to

³⁷ "acchariyaṃ, āvuso, abbhutaṃ, āvuso, yāvañcidaṃ tena bhagavatā jānatā passatā arahatā sammāsambuddhena sattānaṃ nānādhimuttikatā suppaṭividditā. Ayañhi suppiyo paribbājako anekapariyāyena buddhassa avaṇṇaṃ bhāsati, dhammassa avaṇṇaṃ bhāsati, saṅghassa avaṇṇaṃ bhāsati; suppiyassa pana paribbājakassa antevāsī brahmadatto māṇavo anekapariyāyena buddhassa vaṇṇaṃ bhāsati, dhammassa vaṇṇaṃ bhāsati, saṅghassa vaṇṇaṃ bhāsati. Itūhame ubho ācariyantevāsī aññamaññassa ujuvipaccanīkavādā bhagavantaṃ piṭṭhito piṭṭhito anubandhā honti bhikkhusaṅghañcāti" (DN 1.2); translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

³⁸ "appamattakaṃ kho panetaṃ, bhikkhave, oramattakaṃ sīlamattakaṃ, yena puthujjano tathāgatassa vaṇṇaṃ vadamāno vadeyya" (DN 1.4; emphasis in translation is mine).

³⁹ The exposition of morality begins with a profound ethical dimension but evolves into a long list of practices that the Buddha avoids, which is difficult to take fully seriously. It is one thing that the Buddha avoids sitting on luxurious seats, but another to provide a long list of

see and understand, quiet, lofty, beyond the sphere of reasoning, subtle, accessible to the expert, which the Tathāgata teaches after having realized them with his own special knowledge, *by which true praise of him can be made correctly*”;⁴⁰ this will lead to a presentation of the philosophy of the BJS. It should be clear that the idea the discourse aims to convey is not only what the Buddha’s deep understanding is but also that he is one who possesses such understanding and therefore that he is an exceptional object of reverence. In the BJS, the Buddha’s philosophy and his praise or worship are fundamentally connected.

The BJS teaches that praise for the Buddha for things one can see with one’s eyes—namely, for his inspiring ethical behavior—is misplaced. Rather, true praise for him should relate to his deeply cultivated philosophical understandings, to his mature cognition, which produces a unique way of seeing that is elusive and unobservable. Each set of mistaken views that is now introduced is said to provide a good way for praising the Buddha, who does not entertain the views and understands the prices one pays for holding them (including prices in the afterlife); he also knows what is beyond such views.⁴¹ The outline of the mistaken philosophical positions provides the main bulk of the discourse. Some of them are introduced with a good degree of narrative embellishment, which at times is a humorous caricature, most explicitly of the God Brahmā, who mistakenly identifies himself as the all-powerful creator.⁴² Yet the philosophical statement is framed as a discussion of how one should praise the Buddha. If the text only wished to introduce the Buddha’s philosophical acumen, there would be no need for this roundabout way of presenting the theoretical understanding. Rather, a delicate statement is being made regarding the true way to understand the Buddha, which should rely on his inner state of mind and mode of perception. Philosophy and the understanding of the Buddha are, in this context, different sides of the same coin. If we read the philosophy without the

the specific types of seats he avoids, made of different kinds of cloth with their specific ornamentations; similarly, it is one thing to say that the Buddha doesn’t turn to frivolous fun making, but another to list all the games he avoids, such as chess on different boards or “in the air,” backgammon and other dice games, doing somersaults, or playing with toy carts.

⁴⁰ [Atthi, bhikkhave,] aññeva dhammā gambhīrā duddasā duranubodhā santā paṇītā atakāvacarā nipuṇā paṇḍitavedanīyā, ye tathāgato sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedeti, yehi tathāgatassa yathābhuccam vaṇṇaṃ sammā vadamānā vadeyyuṃ” (DN 1.17; emphasis in the translation is mine).

⁴¹ “This, monks, the Tathāgata knows ‘these philosophical tenets being held in this way, being regarded as paramount, this is their future rebirth, their after-life destination.’ The Tathāgata knows this and knows what is beyond it. Knowing this he does not grasp; not grasping he knows peace for himself . . .” (Tayidaṃ, bhikkhave, tathāgato pajānāti – ‘ime diṭṭhiṭṭhānā evaṃgahitā evaṃparāmaṭṭhā evaṃgatikā bhavanti evaṃabhisamparāyā’ti, taṃca tathāgato pajānāti, tato ca uttaritaraṃ pajānāti; taṃca pajānanaṃ na parāmasati, aparāmasato cassa paccattaññeva nibbuti veditā . . . [DN 1.16–17]). For a discussion of this passage and its theoretical context, see Eviatar Shulman, “On Psychological Solutions to Metaphysical Problems in the *Pārāyana-vagga*,” *Philosophy East and West* 67, no. 2 (2017), forthcoming.

⁴² This happens in views 5–7 of “partial eternalism” (*ekaccassatavāda*). For Brahmā’s foolish, supercilious exclamation, see the outline of the *Kevaṭṭha-sutta* below.

story and ignore the narrative framing, we lose a significant part of the message, if not its true core. Theory is possibly not more than a partial intrusion into the infinitely deep phenomenon of a Buddha. This idea is expressed cogently in the closing of the discourse, when the Buddha likens Brahmins and recluses who are trapped in the net of sixty-two views to fish caught in a net. Speaking of himself he then says, “Monks, the body of the Tathāgata remains, with its link to becoming severed. So long as his body remains, gods and men can see him. After the breaking up of the body, after the consummation of life, gods and men will see him no more.”⁴³ This enigmatic claim speaks of the Buddha’s infinite depths and subtlety, which cannot be apprehended; like the philosophical statement in the discourse, perhaps it cannot even be understood.⁴⁴ This closing statement serves to retain the focus on the Buddha’s nature, which is from our point of view beyond grasp.

The BJS is thus composed with significant dexterity in the application of narrative technique. The philosophical teaching is meaningful in its own right, but the idea that the Buddha can teach such subtle things and that he is worthy of honor for this distinguished capacity is no less important. It is not only that the story frames the philosophical discussion, but that philosophy brings out the deepest praise of the Buddha. These aspects of the texts are, however, normally ignored in modern scholarship; a salient example is two recent articles published by Bhikkhu Anālayo, a leading scholar on early Buddhism who publishes extensively and is widely read and quoted. Anālayo discusses the BJS as an example of early Buddhist oral tradition but does not relate in any way to the creative storytelling in the text, even though he focuses on “the opening narration of the *Brahmajāla*.”⁴⁵

The BJS opens the SKV with a statement that combines narrative and doctrine, *Buddha-anusmṛti* with philosophy. On another level, the BJS is an alien element in the SKV, since it is the only discourse that is not structured around one specific, very long formula that presents a comprehensive outline of the Buddhist path.⁴⁶ This formula is paradigmatically introduced in the following discourse, the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* (The discourse on the fruits

⁴³ “Ucchinnabhavanettiko, bhikkhave, tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. Yāvassa kāyo ṭhassati, tāva naṃ dakkhanti devamanussā. Kāyassa bhedā uddhaṃ jīvita-pariyādānā na naṃ dakkhanti devamanussā” (DN 1.45).

⁴⁴ The philosophy of the BJS is extremely elusive, perhaps even beyond the scope of reason. A cogent example is the denial of views on the world having an end or no end (*antāntavāda*), which denies also the possibility of both views or neither of them applying. The next four views denied (“endless wriggling,” *amaravikkhepavāda*) then proscribe a skeptical position, so that one is left not only with nothing positive to say on the matter but with nothing negative as well.

⁴⁵ Anālayo, “The *Brahmajāla*,” 45–47. In this Anālayo continues in the footsteps of Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Discourse on the All-Embracing Net of Views, The Brahmajāla Sutta and Its Commentarial Exegesis* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1978). The second article is Anālayo, “The *Brahmajāla* and the Early Buddhist Oral Tradition.”

⁴⁶ The section on morality (*sīla*) in the BJS is part of the SKV formula. Perhaps this is what gives the collection its name—the *Sīla-kkhandha-vagga*.

of renunciation; hereafter SPhS), in which we again see the importance of narrative: on the eve of the full moon in the fall month of Kumodī, Ajātasattu (Skt. Ajātaśatru), king of Magadha, sits on the roof of his palace surrounded by his ministers and councilors. As knowledgeable readers or listeners, we already know that Ajātasattu had previously killed his father, King Bimbisāra, in order to usurp the throne. We therefore are not surprised that Ajātasattu is searching at this auspicious moment for consolation and peace of mind, which he hopes to find by meeting an inspiring religious teacher.⁴⁷ The king is uninterested in meeting six rival teachers of the Buddha suggested by his ministers—he had met them all before but was unimpressed; their doctrines will later be caricatured on the way to presenting the supremacy of the Buddhist teachings and spiritual path. The king's physician Jīvaka⁴⁸ then suggests that he visit the Buddha, who is staying at his mango grove. He introduces the Buddha through a short but very important formula, which lives in Buddhist ritual to this day—"itipi so bhagavā araham sammāsambuddho vijjācaraṇasampanno sugato lokavidū anuttaro puriso-dammasārathi satthā devamanussānam buddho bhagavāti" (This is He, the Lord, the Arahant, the Fully-Perfected-Buddha, endowed with wisdom and conduct, the blessed one, knower of the worlds, the highest leader for people to be tamed, teacher of gods and men, the Buddha, the Lord).⁴⁹ This inspires the king, who has his 500 wives seated on 500 she-elephants, mounts his own royal elephant, and, followed by a large entourage carrying burning lanterns, sets out toward the Buddha. When Ajātasattu and his crowd near the Buddha's residence, the monks are so quiet that the king fears he has been set up. Jīvaka pacifies him and Ajātasattu approaches the Buddha, who sits at the head of an assembly of 1,250 monks. The king is greatly moved and expresses his wish that his own son Udayabhadda will know such calm; this is a double reference to Ajātasattu's care for his son and to his underlying fear that he will suffer the same fate as his own father. The majestic quiet of the Buddha, sitting in front of a large, silent assembly, is a powerful image for the Buddhist path and the empty space toward which it is headed. Again, this is a picture of the doctrinal purport of the discourse, which will now be revealed through the formulation of the path in the SKV formula.

A careful look at the SKV formula is beyond the scope of our discussion due to its exceptional length. The formula is introduced by the Buddha in order to describe "the fruits of renunciation," in answer to the king's inquiry.

⁴⁷ MacQueen (*A Study of the Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra*, 233–45) emphasizes the turmoil of the king's emotional state. MacQueen's study brings out a number of the important literary features of the SPhS and his general approach to the text is much in line with the reading advocated here. MacQueen also offers translations and comparative discussions of the different versions of the text, relating also to four Chinese translations and to one in Sanskrit, and offers insights into the historical development of the text.

⁴⁸ Jīvaka is a well-known figure from Buddhist narrative in his own right; see Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, 29–31.

⁴⁹ DN 1.49.

The king, we recall, is searching for consolation, and he has yet to encounter a religious teacher that can inspire his confidence. No teacher has offered a satisfying response to his question: “People of any profession receive pay for their efforts, and are therefore a source of pleasure for themselves, their families and friends, and are able to present gifts to Brahmins and recluses that will lead them to heaven and to other good results; what are the fruits that a recluse may gain?”⁵⁰ The other teachers failed to answer, mainly since they espoused a nihilist understanding of cause and effect; no action carries any result and afterlife is a scam. “Why, pray tell,” says the king, “should one like me think in unpeaceful ways of a brahmin or recluse living in my dominion?”⁵¹ Given their unpleasing responses, which brought unrest rather than peace (*pasāda*) to the king,⁵² he left these teachers’ presence without saying a word.

Now Ajātasattu addresses the same question to the Buddha. The positive and convincing answer to this question will position the Buddha as the just object of royal reverence (with its accompanying “fruits”), and as the supreme spiritual teacher of the land. After the Buddha answers the question with two worldly examples, which demonstrate that the king would show reverence to a recluse who was earlier his servant or a tax-paying farmer, the Buddha moves to his real answer, which he supplies through the SKV formula. This long exposition impresses the king to the degree that he takes refuge in the *Buddha-dhamma-saṅgha* and expresses his regret for taking the life of his father, obviously a deeply meaningful and transformative moment for him. The subtle implication is that only the Buddha could explain the relation between action and result⁵³ in a way that could cause the king to take responsibility for his murderous act. Moreover, the text hints that the Buddha has the ability to pardon the king in a manner that is karmically consequential. After taking refuge and requesting the Buddha to remember him as a lay follower (*upāsaka*) for life, the king requests him to pardon his offense: “A transgression overcame me, sir, being so weak, confused and in a negative state, so that I took the life of my father, the righteous king, for the sake of the throne. Please pardon this transgression of mine, for my future restraint.”⁵⁴ We now realize what the king has been searching for—a religious leader who has the power to pardon his sin. For this reason he visited other teachers and left disappointed; their teaching could offer no mechanism for pardon. Indeed, their denial of the relation of cause and ef-

⁵⁰ DN 1.51.

⁵¹ “kathañhi nāma mādiso samaṇaṃ vā brāhmaṇaṃ vā vijite vasantaṃ apasādetabbaṃ maññeyyāti.”

⁵² A main function of a religious mendicant for society (as of a Hindu god today) is to allow the possibility of generative mental peace (*pasāda*, Skt. *prasāda*) through respect or gifts to him.

⁵³ In Indian philosophical jargon, “fruit” (*phala*) is a term used to signify karmic “effect.”

⁵⁴ “Accayo maṃ, bhante, accagamā yathābālaṃ yathāmūlhaṃ yathāakusalaṃ, yohaṃ pita-raṃ dhammikaṃ dhammarājānaṃ issariyakāraṇā jīvita voropesiṃ. Tassa me, bhante bhagavā accayaṃ accayato paṭiggaṇhātu āyatiṃ saṃvarāyāti” (DN 1.85).

fect could not even recognize the sin. The king is in need of such recognition so that he may be pardoned and from here on lead a life of moral restraint. Apparently, without a realized teacher acknowledging his sin, there is little point in his living morally. The Buddha's achievement as a religious adept and realized being positions him in a place where he can recognize Ajātasattu's sin, accept it, and perhaps even unpack its karmic potency. The Buddha identifies the fault and states that since Ajātasattu acknowledges his sin, he will now grow in the noble discipline and attain future restraint.⁵⁵ The Buddha is reflected here not only as a religious teacher but also as an embodiment of fundamental truth.

As with the BJS, there are enough messages embedded in the story of the SPhS to count as a valuable religious statement. But the text also has a teaching, which some would take to be the pinnacle of the text. Although from a doctrinal point of view the exposition of the path through the SKV formula is significant, it also serves the narrative function of offering an idealized picture of the path to enlightenment that defines "the fruits of the life of a recluse." According to the outline provided by this formula, a student first recognizes the Buddha's supremacy through an articulation based on the *itipi so bhagavān* clause we read above ("This is He, the Lord . . .").⁵⁶ He then leaves home, shaves his head and beard, dons the ochre robe—notice that, although devastatingly realistic, these are valuable images—and thoroughly perfects his morality. This will prepare him for the higher attain-

⁵⁵ It is questionable what the precise function of the Buddha's recognition of sin is and whether he can pardon the act in a way that would affect the king's karma. According to Margaret Cone (*A Dictionary of Pāli*, pt. 1, *a-kh* [Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2001]), the formulation *accayaṃ accayato paṭiggaṇhāti* means "accepts (the confession of) the fault, pardons the offence" (23). Cone also lists a similar phrase that uses *passati* instead of *paṭiggaṇhāti*, in order to speak of recognizing a sin. This is the term the Buddha employs in order to speak of Ajātasattu's recognition (*accayaṃ accayato disvā*), which suggests that the Buddha's action is more than recognition. Accepting a confession and pardoning a fault are not, however, equal, and it is difficult to decide what precisely the text aims to convey. The Buddha's claim, after acknowledging the truth in the king's statement, is that "having recognized the sin and making amends for it according to the dhamma, we pardon this for you/accept this (confession) for you" (*yato ca kho tvaṃ, mahārāja, accayaṃ accayato disvā yathā dhammaṃ paṭikarosi, taṃ te mayaṃ paṭiggaṇhāma*). Because of this, the Buddha states that the king will grow in morality (*vuddhihesā, mahārāja, ariyassa vinaya*) and attain restraint, which does imply a change a karmic potency. After the king departs, however, the Buddha says that the king is "injured and impaired" (*khata, upahata*) and that under different conditions he would have attained "the eye of wisdom" (*dhammacakkhu*). We have no way of deciding whether the Buddha expects there to be further prices the king will pay for his action, perhaps in hell, or that not attaining a distinction in realization is a painful enough result.

⁵⁶ The *itipi so bhagavā* formula is here, as in numerous other cases, followed by the statement: "He teaches the people of this world, including the gods, Māra, Brahmā, renunciates and Brahmins, and all gods and men, having penetrated it through his own powers of insight. He teaches the truth that is good at the beginning, good in the middle, and good at the end, in the spirit and letter, and reveals the fully perfected and pure holy life" (*So imaṃ lokaṃ sadevakaṃ samārakaṃ sabrahmakāṃ sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiṃ pajaṃ sadevamanussaṃ sayāṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedeti. So dhammaṃ deseti ādikalyāṇaṃ majjhakalyāṇaṃ pariyoṣānakalyāṇaṃ sātthaṃ sabyañjanaṃ, kevalaparipuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ brahmacariyaṃ pakāseti*; DN 1.49).

ments of meditation and knowledge, which are the true fruits of renunciation. Navigating successfully through a series of meditative practices and achievements, he will then be liberated. These higher attainments include the meditative states of *jhāna*, supernatural powers such as the ability to multiply his body, to walk on water or move through earth and mountains, and the capacity to know his past lives. Naturally, reading the description of the path in the present, narrative context makes one wonder how literally the authors of this formula intended their descriptions to be taken; perhaps, here too, the poetic function is prime. Final knowledge then arises when one attains the destruction of the inflows (*āśava*).

Once again, we may mark the nuanced, creative storytelling in the SPhS and see that it carries significant messages of the text. Not only is there an ideological point here regarding the Buddha's supremacy, but there is an aesthetic experience involved, which relates to the vision of the royal procession toward the Buddha on 501 elephants, with fiery lanterns ablaze, on the night of the full moon. The emotional power of the king's transformation, perhaps his anagnorisis, is deeply significant as a depiction of the Buddha's unique cosmological status. Further aesthetic sensitivities are aroused by the interplay of the different layers of the narrative. All these heighten the appreciation of the Buddha, within the prospects of "mindfulness of the Buddha." From a doctrinal point of view, the text offers an important conceptualization of the Buddhist path, which itself is channeled to express some of the narrative concerns and is better seen as an idealized image that need not necessarily be taken literally.⁵⁷ Again, the teaching and the message are intertwined, so that the poetic aspects of the story absorb large parts of the doctrinal position and form a major part of the message. In a sense, the picture of the regal procession on the full moon night serves as a representation not only for the king's devotion toward the Buddha or the honor he deserves, but for the nature of Buddhist texts, which set out in inspiring fashion to light the darkness of the mind and reach the Buddha.

II. APPLYING AND REAPPLYING THE SKV FORMULA

The concern with narrative continues throughout the SKV and should be considered a defining characteristic of the collection. This is particularly ev-

⁵⁷ Gregory L. Lucente (*The Narrative of Realism and Myth: Verga, Lawrence, Faulkner, Pavese* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981], chap. 3) remarks on the relation between myth and realism in narrative are interesting in this respect, even though they treat much later traditions in the West. Even in genres of realism, myth works to shape characters and objects into idealized types and affects plots by "lending them an aura of unified necessity rather than randomness or contingency" (44). Given that the SKV formula is repeated in the next eleven discourses, Lucente's following remarks are particularly pertinent: "Briefly, then, mythic components are *those repeating elements of narrative* which approach an existence apart from the specificity of space and time, *which at their core involve unified and idealized figures*, and which establish and depend upon a relationship of unquestioning belief" (42, emphasis mine).

ident in the reworking of the SKV formula, which demonstrates how this doctrinal encapsulation of the path is absorbed into the literary expression of the discourses.⁵⁸ Formulas are not just teachings that were shaped in this way for easy recall in an oral setting, but are narrative elements used to invoke specific images of the Buddha and of his teachings.

It is not possible to enter a discussion of all the remaining discourses in the SKV in great detail here. I will therefore survey these discourses in order to view some of their more remarkable narrative elements and to mark editorial choices in shaping the collection. The SPhS taught that it is good for kings to go visit the Buddha; the main point of the three subsequent discourses is that Brahmins, the religious experts of India, should do so as well. These discourses—the *Ambaṭṭha*-, *Soṇadaṇḍa*-, and *Kūṭadanta-suttas*—are based on a similar pattern, in which an eminent Brahmin hears of the Buddha's greatness through the *itipi so bhagavā* formula and goes to visit him. The *Soṇadaṇḍa* and *Kūṭadanta* are especially similar to each other, while the *Ambaṭṭha* is closer to the *Brahmāyu-sutta* of the MN. In the *Ambaṭṭha*, a student of the great Brahmin Pokkharasāti, is sent to inquire whether reports about the Buddha are true, an effort he will accomplish by identifying the thirty-two marks of a great man (*mahāpurisalakkhaṇa*) on the Buddha's body.⁵⁹ When Ambaṭṭha meets the Buddha, he is extremely disrespectful and condescending, and the Buddha amends this by demonstrating his superior caste status to that of Ambaṭṭha. The Buddha then gives a teaching that is based in part on the SKV formula. After Ambaṭṭha has turned more humble, he is prepared to search for the marks. He quickly identifies the visible thirty of them, but two are hidden—the Buddha's long tongue and sheathed genitals. The Buddha perceives Ambaṭṭha's doubts through his supernatural powers and displays the missing marks by licking his own ears and forehead and affording the young Brahmin a miraculous vision of his genitals. Ambaṭṭha then reports back to Pokkharasāti, who is appalled by his student's behavior and kicks him over. Pokkharasāti proceeds to visit the Buddha himself, ascertains the thirty-two marks through the same supernatural display, apologizes to the Buddha for his student's behavior and declares himself a lay follower. Again, the drama is the message itself.

In the *Ambaṭṭha*, the SKV formula is brought in in order to help make a point about caste. The Buddha reveals Ambaṭṭha's inferior caste status by demonstrating through a complex mythic tale that his lineage returns to a servant woman in the Sakyan court. He then moves to speak of the superior-

⁵⁸ The same formula is repeated in almost exactly the same form in eight discourses in the MN as well. These are the *Cūḷahatthipadopama*- (MN 27), *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya*- (MN 38), *Kandaraka*- (MN 51), *Appanaka*- (MN 60), *Sandaka*- (MN 76), *Cūḷasakuludāyī*- (MN 79), *Devadaha*- (MN 101), and the *Dantabhūmi-suttas* (MN 125; here relatively many changes are introduced).

⁵⁹ On this doctrine, see Michael David Radich, "The Somatics of Liberation: Ideas about Embodiment in Buddhism from Its Origins to the Fifth Century C.E." (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2007); as well as Eviatar Shulman, "The Buddha as the Pole of Existence," *History of Religions* 57, no. 2 (2017), forthcoming.

ity of *khattiyas* (*kṣatriya*) over Brahmins and mentions among other things that they are “endowed with knowledge and good conduct” (*vijjācaraṇasampanna*). The SKV formula comes to explain supreme conduct and knowledge within a context that focuses on caste. This is part of a more general point regarding the higher spiritual status of Buddhist monks in relation to Brahmins, so that purity is determined by internal and external action and not by birth, looks, caste, and so on. Once again, the teaching of the SKV formula is absorbed by the narrative and does not stand on its own. In fact, this is probably a good example of the way formulas can serve narrative purposes before their doctrinal import is of any concern—the formula was probably “introduced” into the *Ambaṭṭha* only so the latter could be included in the SKV. Better said, the *Ambaṭṭha* is told in a way that fits the narrative themes of the SKV, and in order to find its place in the collection it includes the SKV formula.

The next suttas continue the theme regarding the relation between distinguished Brahmins and the Buddha. In the following discourse, Soṇadaṇḍa sits on his balcony for his afternoon siesta. He sees a large group of Brahmins heading toward the Buddha’s residence at Gaggarā and decides to join them. This upsets another group of foreign Brahmins who feel that it is not right for such an important Brahmin as Soṇadaṇḍa to visit the Buddha. Rather, the Buddha should visit him, given that Soṇadaṇḍa is of pure cast for seven generations from both mother and father, rich, beautiful, learned, and so on, according to a long formula that expresses a Brahmin’s distinction. Soṇadaṇḍa responds with a parallel characterization of the Buddha that is based on the same formula, which receives careful touches so as to present the Buddha as his senior. For example, he is not just honored by King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha and by the great Brahmin Pokkharasāti (notice the interesting intertextuality in relation to the *Ambaṭṭha*)⁶⁰ but also by King Pasenadi of Kosala, and all three have gone to him for refuge together with their sons, wives, assemblies, and councilors; the Buddha is honored by gods who come to learn from him; he does not just have “strong morality” (*vuddhasīla*) but is endowed with “noble morality” (*ariyasīla*); superhuman beings cannot molest humans wherever he stays—a type of protection even kings are normally unable to provide; most importantly, he is beyond desire and could have had the same rank and riches of Soṇadaṇḍa but chose to renounce these and leave home, which places him on a higher spiritual plane. The conclusion of the discussion between Soṇadaṇḍa and the foreign Brahmins is that the Buddha is worthy of a visit; all Brahmin figures in the discourse now set out toward his dwelling.

The same elements will be repeated in the following discourse to Kūṭadanta. The *Ambaṭṭha*-, *Soṇadaṇḍa*-, and *Kūṭadanta-suttas* all develop the theme that “it is good for Brahmins to visit the Buddha,” implying that the Buddha

⁶⁰ On intertextuality, see below in relation to the *Tevijja-sutta*.

is superior to the land's most eminent Brahmins. Obviously, this is a point Buddhist texts had to make in order to compete on the religious debate ground of ancient India. In fact, the discourses say not only that Brahmins should visit the Buddha, but that it is good for them to see—that is to take *darśan* of—the Buddha; the opening formula of these discourses ends with the sentence “it is good to see worthy-ones [*arahants*] of this sort” (*sādhukho pana tathārūpānam arahataṃ dassanaṃ hotīti*).⁶¹

Of course there is a teaching to each discourse as well, which the Buddha imparts to Soṇadaṇḍa, Kūṭadanta, Pokkharasāti, or Ambaṭṭha. The teaching exemplifies the Buddha's control and superior understanding of Brahmin lore. To Soṇadaṇḍa, who is anxious that he will not know how to deal with the Buddha's interrogation, he presents an easy question about what qualifies a good Brahmin. In his exchange with Soṇadaṇḍa the Buddha is able to show that the essential qualities of a Brahmin relate to his morality and wisdom, rather than to caste and his external features. The Buddha then explains the true nature of morality and wisdom with the help of the SKV formula. In the *Kūṭadanta*, the Buddha provides instruction regarding the most excellent sacrifice, emphasizing values of nonviolence and personal responsibility. Indeed, there are more powerful sacrifices, such as giving to recluses, building a monastery (*vihāra*), taking refuge, living according to the precepts, and so on. And what would be the greatest sacrifice? Here the Buddha turns once again to the SKV formula on the Buddhist path.

The philosophy that the Buddha expresses in these discourses is important for understanding the history of Buddhist ideas. But it is not necessarily the central element of these texts. According to my interpretation, the main point made in each one of these discourses, and certainly in their combination, which will be repeated numerous times later in the collection, is that the Buddha is the supreme teacher and that Brahmins are to respect him. Perhaps these texts record true conversion stories. But even if there are historical truths to these tales, they are absorbed into the religious message and the compelling, idealized image of the Buddha. It is important also to notice the careful editing that places these texts together.

The next discourses continue the themes we have seen thus far. The *Mahāli-sutta* (Discourse to Mahāli [discourse 6]) proceeds with the idea that

⁶¹ Joy Maneé, in “Case Histories from the Pāli Canon I: The Sāmaññaphala Sutta Hypothetical Case History or How to be Sure to Win a Debate” (*Journal of the Pali Text Society* 21 [1995]: 32) and “Case Histories from the Pāli Canon I: *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmin*, *Anāgamin*, *Arahat*—the Four Stages Case History or Spiritual Materialism and the Need for Tangible Results” (*Journal of the Pali Text Society* 21 [1995]: 113), distinguishes between the MN and DN, saying that the former is intended for an audience already converted to Buddhism, while the latter intends to attract such converts. Although she generally displays good sensitivity to the literary quality of the materials, this distinction is too strong and is based on a classification and a statistical analysis that is not convincing. At the moment we have little understanding regarding the question of which audience the suttas served and whether, or in what way, it included laypeople.

people should visit the Buddha, beginning with a large group of Brahmin emissaries and then focusing on the discussion between the Buddha and the Licchavi youth Mahāli (also called Oṭṭhadha), who visits the Buddha with a large crowd. The central role played by Mahāli, a representative of the politically significant Licchavi clan, extends the theme of the worthiness of receiving the Buddha's *darśan* from kings and Brahmins to other strands of society. In the following *Jāliya-sutta* (Discourse to Jāliya), two wandering recluses arrive to receive teachings, followed by the naked ascetic Kassapa in the next *Mahā-sīhanāda-sutta* (Discourse on the great lion roar). Discussion with wandering recluses continues in the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* (Discourse to Poṭṭhapāda), but here it is the Buddha who visits Poṭṭhapāda and his students since he has left too early for his alms round and has some free time to kill. Although Buddha visits Poṭṭhapāda, the latter and his students go out of their way to make way for the revered teacher and are so thrilled at the occasion that they even manage to quiet their habitual noise. Their leader Poṭṭhapāda offers the Buddha the central seat and sits himself on a lower seat to the side. Then the Buddha provides them with teachings that further their own understanding and practice. The opening story, itself a familiar formula from numerous other discourses, focuses on the noisy ascetics who quiet themselves in honor of the Buddha. This creates an interesting resonance with the philosophical purport of the discourse, which reflects on the nature of the deep, radically calm, meditative state of cessation (*nirodha*).⁶² Between these discourses and the others that precede them in the SKV there are interesting narrative and doctrinal connections that demonstrate that the grouping of the discourses is not random. For example, the BJS opens with a denial of philosophical views; at the end of the *Mahāli* and in the *Jāliya*, a question phrased by Jāliya is presented regarding two views from the “unanswered questions,” another group of philosophical positions denied by the Buddha. Then, in the *Poṭṭhapāda*, the full ten “unanswered questions” are addressed. Each discourse also raises specific points that are interesting to address from a literary point of view, such as the characterization of figures and the choice of places.⁶³

Some of these discourses make more interesting use of the SKV formula than others. The *Jāliya* is not much more than a repetition of the last section of the *Mahāli*, in a way that suggests that the formula was introduced into the

⁶² For further discussion of the opening formula of the *Poṭṭhapāda*, see Shulman, “Orality and Creativity.”

⁶³ For example, the *Mahā-sīhanāda* takes place in Uruññāya in the deer park at Kaṇṇakathale. The only other discourse in the Nikāyas that takes place at this same place is the *Kaṇṇakathala-sutta* (MN 90), in which the Buddha instructs King Pasenadi of Kosala about omniscience. This may be pure chance but could raise the association that the king Pasenadi treats the Buddha reverentially. Similarly, the naked ascetic Kassapa appears in two other discourses in the *Samyutta-Nikāya*, in one of which he attains liberation after receiving the Buddha's teaching. Kassapa has perhaps become more of a literary figure than a historical one.

latter only in order that it may be included in the collection. The application of the formula in the *Mahā-sīhanāda* is more impressive, where it helps the Buddha show the naked ascetic Kassapa that ascetic practice does not produce any true distinction in morality, meditation, and wisdom;⁶⁴ only a monk who has gone through the practices included in the SKV formula can be called a Brahmin or a renunciate. In the *Poṭṭhapāda*, only the first section of the SKV formula appears, from the statement on the Buddha's "arising in the world" through the going forth and the perfection of morality. Then, since the focus of the discourse is on the profound meditative state of "cessation," the text suffices with a description of the *jhānas* and their presentation is adapted to fit the definition of practice toward cessation.

The application of the SKV formula in the following *Subha-sutta* (Discourse to Subha [discourse 10]) is particularly interesting. Here it is not the Buddha who teaches, but Ānanda, his faithful attendant, to whom the Brahmin youth Subha turns for instruction shortly after the Buddha's death. As a continuation of the theme of "everybody visits the Buddha," this is itself significant, since the implication is that after the Buddha's death, people who turned to the Buddha should now approach his disciples (and his disciples' disciples). This is a good example of the way a literary approach to the discourses helps bring out their significance from an emic point of view; earlier scholars had trouble understanding what contribution the discourse may have.⁶⁵ The setting of the discourse during the days after the Buddha's death is in itself filled with narrative potency.⁶⁶ From our perspective, what is most valuable is the way Ānanda paraphrases the Buddha's instruction through the SKV formula, classifying its elements under the three headings of morality, meditation, and wisdom (*sīla, samādhi, paññā*), which indeed became the main way to classify the teachings in the Buddhist tradition. In this the *Subha-sutta* elaborates upon the *Mahā-sīhanāda*, echoing it also in the statement that morality relates only to the earlier stages of practice and that the path extends well beyond it. In fact, the positioning of the *Subha* in a sequence after the *Mahā-sīhanāda* and the *Poṭṭhapāda* seems to be more than coincidence. In the *Mahā-sīhanāda*, Kassapa, as a naked ascetic, focuses on action and the Buddha's main point is about morality and going beyond it. Then in the *Poṭṭhapāda*, which concentrates on the extreme *samādhi* state of "cessation," the focus turns to *samādhi*. In the map of the path in the *Subha*, which posits a developmental sequence from morality, through *samādhi*, to wisdom, it is explicitly stated that one must perfect morality, proceed to *samādhi*, and then

⁶⁴ For "meditation" the *Mahā-sīhanāda* speaks of *citta* (mind) rather than *samādhi*.

⁶⁵ T. W. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha* (London: Oxford University Press, 1899), 265; Maurice Walsche, trans., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (1987; Boston: Wisdom, 1995), 556 n. 225.

⁶⁶ The *Mahā-parinibbāna-sutta*, which tells the story of the Buddha's death, is perhaps the prime example of masterful, emotionally potent storytelling in the Nikāyas. I will devote separate attention to this text in a future study.

continue to wisdom;⁶⁷ certain themes develop not only in the texts, but between them, which again suggests that attention be devoted to the editing of sutta-collections.

If the political and spiritual regents of the land have been shown to be the Buddha's seconds, why not make the same point about the gods? This is a major theme of the *Kevaṭṭha-sutta* (Discourse to Kevaṭṭha [discourse 11]), one of the more influential texts of the SKV.⁶⁸ Here we again find an opening narrative that may be thought of as a text on its own and which has interesting resonances with the main body of the discourse. Kevaṭṭha is a householder from Nālanda who comes to visit the Buddha. He opens by saying that there are many believers who would benefit from the Buddha sending one of his disciples into town to perform miracles. This is an opportunity for the Buddha to relate his negative evaluation of miracles, saying that he only authorizes miracles concerned with direct teaching. In the explication of this "miracle" he turns to the SKV formula, defining its attainments—the same distinctions in knowledge and meditation the SPhS called "fruits"—as "miracles" (Pātihāriya).⁶⁹ The *Kevaṭṭha* now moves to its main section, in which the Buddha tells of a monk who had an insight regarding the place in which the four material elements "cease."⁷⁰ He moves through the powers of his *samādhi* between different godly realms, rising higher and higher in divine hierarchy, but no gods can explain his vision. Finally, the Gods of Brahmā's Assembly (*brahmakāyikā devā*) suggest that he ask the creator himself. As we would expect, even Brahmā has no clue, and he is even portrayed as a fool: all Brahmā has to say is how powerful he is—"I am Brahmā, the great Brahmā, all-powerful, unrivaled, seer of all, authorizer of all power, ruler, maker, emanator, leader, creator, powerful, father of all that is and will be."⁷¹ When the monk reminds Brahmā that he wasn't asking about his power, Brahmā takes him aside and says that he can't appear unknowledgeable in front of the other gods. Brahmā is, however, intelligent enough to direct the monk back to the Buddha. The monk reaches the great teacher who likens him to a bird (or to the dove in Noah's ark) that returns home after searching for land in all directions. The Buddha rephrases the question and then answers it with a beautiful *udāna* (inspired utterance), which,

⁶⁷ Subha expresses his appreciation for the inspiring consummation of *samādhi*: not only do other teachers not attain it, but here it is even said that there is something beyond. A similar statement was made earlier in relation to morality.

⁶⁸ The *Kevaṭṭha* is most famous for its discussion of miracles. For further elaboration on this important statement against miracle making, see Luis O. Gómez, "The Bodhisattva as Wonder-Worker," in *Prajñāparamitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*, ed. Lewis Lancaster and Luis Gómez, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 221–61; David Fiordalis, "Miracles and Superhuman Powers in South Asian Buddhist Literature" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 31–35.

⁶⁹ DN 1.215.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "aḥmasmi, bhikkhu, brahmā mahābrahmā abhibhū anabhibhūto aññadatthudaso vasa-vatī issaro kattā nimmātā seṭṭho sajitā vaṣī pitā bhūtabhabyāna'nti" (DN 1.221).

although enigmatic, is left unexplained.⁷² The main point of the discourse, which is brought about by the narrative framing, is that the Buddha is the superior being in the cosmos, and the implication is that he can perform any miracle, as is suggested by the opening story and resonated in Brahmā's statement.

The next, penultimate, *Lohicca-sutta* (Discourse to Lohicca) describes another case of an eminent Brahmin who receives instruction from the Buddha. Lohicca holds the mistaken view that religious specialists need not impart their teachings, since no person can help another. The Buddha corrects his error, thereby demonstrating his social concern, which is of value from the point of view of the SKV that recommends that society accept the Buddha as its primary religious authority. The Buddha then imparts a teaching on worthy and unworthy religious teachers; naturally, those worthy of praise can instruct the SKV formula. Again, the formula serves a literary purpose and its doctrinal import is absorbed into the broader narrative concerns of the discourse and of the SKV as a whole. These narrative aspects are themselves meant to idealize the Buddha and provide context for his pre-eminence. The text thereby makes a doctrinal point at the same time that it offers a relevant vision of the Buddha in the context of *Buddha-anusmṛti*. He is the one who can help us, as is mirrored by the intelligent problem posed by Lohicca of whether people can help each other in a religiously significant way. This would resonate with implicit or explicit critiques of ascetic teachers in India of the day. The discourse ends with Lohicca thanking the Buddha for correcting a view that would have sent him to hell.

A central interest of the SKV is in charting the suitable relations between different strands of Indian society, primarily Brahmins, and the Buddha. It is

⁷² The monk originally had the thought "where [do] these four great elements [earth, water, air, and fire] cease with no remainder?" (kattha nu kho ime cattāro mahābhūtā aparisesā nirujjhanti, seyyathidaṃ—pathavīdhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu vāyodhātū; DN 1.215). The Buddha rephrases this as "Where do water and earth, fire and air find no firm footing? Where do long and short, small and great, good and bad, name and form fully stop?" (Kattha āpo ca pathavī, tejo vāyo na gādhati; kattha dīghañca rassañca, añuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubham; kattha nāmañca rūpañca, asesam uparujjhatī'ti). The Buddha's inspired utterance is then

Consciousness is beyond attributes, endless, thoroughly luminous.
Here water and earth, fire and air find no firm footing.
Here long and short, small and great, good and bad, name and form,
Fully stop.
By the cessation of consciousness, this stops.

[Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ sabbatopabhaṃ; ettha āpo ca pathavī, tejo vāyo na gādhati. ettha dīghañca rassañca, añuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubham; ettha nāmañca rūpañca, asesam uparujjhati; viññāṇassa nirodhena, etthetaṃ uparujjhatī'ti.]

See a discussion of this verse and its context in Eviatar Shulman, "Early Buddhist Imagination: The *Atthakavagga* as Buddhist Poetry," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 35 (2012–13): 380–81 (quoted the from *Udāna* 1.10); Shulman, "The Buddha as the Pole of Existence."

therefore of little surprise that the final discourse in the collection depicts the Buddha as the great expert on what could be thought of as the claim to fame of Brahmins—the knowledge on how to attain union with Brahmā. Two young Brahmin students (*māṇava*) argue whose teacher's instruction will bring one to this goal. They then ask the Buddha to settle their debate. Again, the text uses the *itipi so bhagavā* formula and has them visit the Buddha. What follows is relatively straightforward: the Buddha ridicules Brahmin understanding since, as the two students readily acknowledge, no living Brahmin knows the way to Brahmā and neither has anyone before them in their line of teaching. The Buddha likens Brahmins to blind men leading each other, to people who would say they know the way to union with the sun and the moon, to someone building a staircase for a palace without knowing where the palace stands, and to a person calling the other bank of the river to come near when he wants to cross. Brahmins also have much impurity in their minds, which is far from being Brahma-like. Such downgrading of Brahmins goes on for some time, until the students request direct instruction. Here the Buddha uses the SKV formula to mark the path to union with Brahmā: he relates the formula up to the clause on the overcoming of the obstructions to meditation (*nīvaraṇa*). The latter is a prerequisite for quality meditation, normally the *jhānas*, but here the way to union with Brahmā employs the meditative practices called “Brahma-abodes” (*brahma-vihāra*). These meditations cultivate a mind of loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*), so as to create an utterly pure, loving, and blissful consciousness that will lead one to Brahmā.

All discourses of the SKV apply the SKV formula in ways that adapt it to their literary emphases; this in itself demonstrates that the main, repetitive, doctrinal core of these discourses is first of all a narrative element. This is brought out particularly neatly in the *Tevijja*, whose statement regarding the way to unity with Brahmā becomes difficult to disentangle from its narrative setting and literary impact. Using the *Brahma-vihāra* meditations as an instruction on union with Brahmā makes sense from a doctrinal perspective, but perhaps it is nothing but a narrative strategy used to argue for Buddhist superiority over Brahmins. Apparently, both readings are true, so that philosophy and narrative are here thoroughly intertwined.

From a literary point of view, what is perhaps most notable about the *Tevijja* is its employment of intertextuality. This text does not only resonate with the other discourses to Brahmins in the SKV, but explicitly recalls a large number of discourses to and on Brahmins in the Nikāyas, particularly in the “Section on Brahmins” (*Brāhmaṇavagga*) of the MN. In fact, the *Tevijja* can only be appreciated in full as part of a comparative analysis of a large number of texts, being an arrangement of other materials, a sort of anthology on the Buddha's superiority over Brahmins; this is obviously an appropriate closing chord for the SKV. The intertextuality is made apparent in

the opening of the text, which speaks of a group of five prominent Brahmin teachers—Caṅkī, Tarukkho, Pokkharasāti, Jaṇusoṇi, and Todeyya—that are assembled in the region where the Buddha is staying. With each one of these Brahmins there exist separate discourses that are thereby recalled; tracing these links is an almost endless task. Here we will only mention that this same opening is used in one other discourse, the *Vāseṭṭha-sutta*, of the *Brāhmaṇa-vagga* and of the *Sutta-Nipāta*.⁷³ Like the *Tevijja*, this discourse begins with the same two Brahmin students, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, taking a walk and entering a discussion.⁷⁴ In the *Vāseṭṭha*, however, they posit the ultimate question—“who (or how) is the true Brahmin?” (*kathaṃ, bho, brāhmaṇo hotī*). The verses that comprise the Buddha’s answer not only resonate with the discussion in the *Tevijja*, but form a substantial part of the closing chapter in the popular *Dhammapada* on the true Brahmin.⁷⁵ By employing the same setting in the *Tevijja*, these links are recalled. These are only the most striking intertextual connections in the *Tevijja*, which must have been apparent to authors and audiences of the text, and certainly to the more educated and sensitive among them. This mode of intertextuality is another fascinating example of the dexterous storytelling in the SKV.

CONCLUSION

Yohanan Grinshpon, in his illuminating study on Upaniṣadic storytelling, has spoken of the need to pay attention to the narrative aspects of the texts, rather than the customary sole focus on doctrine and sublime metaphysics. The condensed narrative frameworks of the Upaniṣads bring out the personal meaning of these scriptures, so that philosophy is not an abstract theory but a response to particular states of personal crisis that Grinshpon unearths through a close reading of the stories that frame the teachings. Philosophy is thus healing and transformative, and therefore concentrating only on the abstract aspects of Upaniṣadic utterance leaves one “cold,” on the boundaries of the text, away from its real heart or center where doctrine is “hot” and meaningful.⁷⁶ In a similar way, the approach to the early Buddhist texts advocated here strives to allow them to remain “hot” by exposing their distinctive emotional and existential significance for their authors and audiences. Texts are not mere containers of teachings, but house teachings so as to enhance the glory of the Buddha. The Buddha was immensely valuable to the people whose tales are related in the texts, as he was for the peo-

⁷³ This dual appearance of the same sutta must itself be analyzed and is important for understanding the textual practices at work in the shaping of the canon. The *Sela-sutta*, also of the *Brāhmaṇa-vagga* appears in the *Sutta-Nipāta* as well.

⁷⁴ Vaseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja are also the protagonists of the famous *Aggañña-sutta*, considered the primary cosmogonic myth in the *Sutta-piṭaka*.

⁷⁵ See also the recalling of *Dhammapada* 1.2 in the *Brahmāyu-sutta*, which is from the same family of discourses that relate the conversion stories of eminent Brahmins, at MN 2.135.

⁷⁶ Grinshpon, *Crisis and Knowledge*, chap. 2.

ple who composed, transmitted, and studied them over the ages. This personal significance of the Buddha, who touches authors's, transmitters's, and audiences's hearts and expands their imaginations, is at the core of the early Buddhist texts; these scriptures are an effort to develop an intimate relationship with his figure and to come to terms with his nature and personality. Effects of this sort are shaped less through doctrine, but more through delicate concern with narrative detail. Without becoming aware of the poetic function of the texts and when their nature as literature is ignored, one misses a good part of the message—one should practice mindfulness of the Buddha through the study of Buddhist texts.

The point about the literary value of Buddhist discourses has been made with specific reference to the first section of recitation in the DN, the SKV, and more work needs to be done in order to see to what extent it can be generalized to other parts of the Pāli Nikāyas. We have seen how the texts tell good stories, often complex ones with ingenuous narrative designs, and how they possess patent expressive power that arouse aesthetic sensibilities and address existential concerns. Most important, they are told from a particular point of view, by an author who has an agenda that he or she (or better, they) shares with his audiences. This is not pure history and doctrine, but narrative, a particular organization of the events that has its own idiosyncratic emphases and that makes evident choices and evaluations. This can be seen in the way the discourses reapply the SKV formula in ways that fit the narrative purposes of each discourse; philosophical positions and historical information are absorbed by literary concerns. Further analysis of the literary sides of the texts is desirable, such as regarding the shaping of characters, the application of narrative voice, and focalization, as well as inquiry into the processes involved in editing the collection.

I would like to end on a comparative note, as a suggestion regarding a direction that these understandings may allow us to pursue. There are relatively few sensitivities involved in the statement that Buddhist texts originated in human minds and therefore that almost by definition they possess literary characteristics. This understanding affords a potentially fascinating view regarding the development of authority in religious scripture and of the role of texts in the evolution of religious coherence and cohesion. We have here texts that shape a certain vision, relying on diverse motivations—including aesthetic, emotional, theoretical, ideological, existential, and inspirational ones. Through these creative, formative processes, imagination is channeled into set patterns, which are rehearsed again and again so that they become familiar and natural. This creates a cosmos that revolves around the central source of authority in the text, which itself is an aspect of their narrative structure. In the present case, this source of authority is the Buddha, the compassionate teacher somewhere between the human and the divine. Even if he was once a man (although this is not necessarily how he was understood in ancient India), through the exercise of textual practices he is

raised to be a cosmic source of authority, given that he is the truth that imbues this particular world with its underlying logic. Texts surely do not exhaust the life of religion, but they are a crucial reference point in its constitution that accesses its verbal dimension or ideological core. In this sense, for Buddhism, the Buddha is the ultimate author; he is the true creator of the texts, the man who envisioned the order they assume, even if these texts were put together by his followers through adoption of cultural patterns that existed before he was born. Although the development of authority in Buddhism was obviously more complex, this approach is worthy of consideration as an inquiry into the role of textuality also in other religious traditions. Ultimately, this is a story about the creative potency of texts, as forms of carefully crafted and rehearsed religious speech.

Review Article

The Soul of Scholarship: Jonathan Garb's *Yearnings of the Soul**

Ariel Evan Mayse / Stanford University

Light of the Boundless One! I open up the crannies of my soul
before You.

So, may You encircle them, surround them, enter them, and
penetrate them thoroughly.

Light of the Boundless One! My life is Your life; my light, Your
light; my breath, Your breath.

Light of the Boundless! Become one with me. Cling close to me.
Enable me to dwell amid Your heavens while I live upon this ground.

Let me cling unto Your spirit while I live inside my body.

May I cling unto Your radiance from the depths of my abyss!

(Hillel Zeitlin)¹

At first, as one enters into the service of God, one tastes the beloved sweetness of divinity. The blessed Holy One shows him an initial expansiveness [of the mind], and his heart burns with a mighty passion. But then this achievement is taken away, leaving him naked and bare. Such a person must not give up. His heart must be full of yearning, saying, "When will I once more be given, 'and He shall kiss me with the kisses of his mouth' (Song of Sol. 1:2)." Attaining this [intimacy] once more should be his only focus.

(Kalonymous Kalman Epstein of Krakow)²

Aspiring scholars of Jewish mysticism invariably confront the following proclamation at some point in their graduate training. This dictum issued by Gershom Scholem, the great doyen of our field, held enormous sway for

* Jonathan Garb, *Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 288 pp., \$45.00 (cloth); page citations from this book appear parenthetically in the text. This book is complemented by Garb's just published study *Modern Kabbalah as an Autonomous Domain of Research* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2016).

¹ Hillel Zeitlin, *Hasidic Spirituality for a New Era: The Religious Writings of Hillel Zeitlin*, trans. and ed. Arthur Green (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 198–99. The translation of these poems is that of Joel Rosenberg.

² Kalonymous Kalman Epstein, *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1992), *rimzei kohelet le-shabbath hol ha-mo'ed sukkot*, 720.

many years: "In the final analysis, one may say that there is no authentic original mysticism in our generation, either in the Jewish people or among the nations of the world. Those expressions of feeling or consciousness on the part of the people possessing mystical knowledge, involving the giving of form and its transmission to future generations, have long since ceased. It is clear that in recent generations there have been no awakenings of individuals leading to new forms of mystical teachings or to significant movements in public life. This applies equally well to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam."³ We now know that Scholem's confident but disheartening description of the drought of modern Kabbalah is far from accurate. The past two decades have witnessed an extraordinary outpouring of scholarship exploring the interesting, exciting, and dynamic new forms inhabited by Jewish mysticism in the contemporary world. Far from Scholem's requiem, it is now clear that modern Kabbalah is alive and well.

Israeli scholars have by and large led the way in clearing away this bramble of misconception. The works of academics like Boaz Huss, Jonatan Meir, and Tomer Persico have consistently demonstrated the diverse flourishing of uniquely modern forms of Kabbalah, focusing on the twentieth century but tracing the roots of these phenomena into the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.⁴ The groundbreaking studies of these

³ Gershom Scholem, "Reflections on the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time," in *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time*, ed. Avraham Shapira and trans. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 6.

⁴ Rather than burden the reader by individually specifying the studies of each author, the following list is intended to exemplify the key studies of modern Kabbalah and contemporary Jewish mysticism (in English, when possible): Boaz Huss, "Ask No Questions: Gershom Scholem and the Study of Contemporary Jewish Mysticism," *Modern Judaism* 25, no. 2 (2005): 141–58, "All You Need is LAV: Madonna and Postmodern Kabbalah," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95, no. 4 (2005): 611–24, and "The New Age of Kabbalah: Contemporary Kabbalah, the New Age and Postmodern Spirituality," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 6, no. 2 (2007): 107–25; Jonatan Meir, *Kabbalistic Circles in Jerusalem (1896–1948)* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), and "The Imagined Decline of Kabbalah: The Kabbalistic Yeshiva *Sha'ar ha-Shamayim* and Kabbalah in Jerusalem in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," in *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations*, ed. Boaz Huss, Marco Pasi, and Kocku von Stuckrad (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 197–220; Tomer Persico, "Neo-Hasidic Revival: Expressivist Uses of Traditional Lore," *Modern Judaism* 34, no. 3 (2014): 287–308, and "Hitbodedut for a New Age: Adaptation of Practices among the Followers of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav," *Israel Studies Review* 29, no. 2 (2014): 99–117; Shaul Magid, "Mysticism, History, and a 'New' Kabbalah: Gershom Scholem and the Contemporary Scene," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 101, no. 4 (2011): 511–25, and "The King Is Dead [and has been for three decades], Long Live the King': Contemporary Kabbalah and Scholem's Shadow," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 102, no. 1 (2012): 131–53; Yaakov Ariel, "Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius: The House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, 1967–1977," *Religion and American Culture* 13, no. 2 (2003): 139–65, and "Jews and New Religious Movements: An Introductory Essay," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 15, no. 1 (2011): 5–21; Jody Myers, "The Kabbalah Centre and Contemporary Spirituality," *Religion Compass* 2, no. 3 (2008): 409–20, and "Kabbalah at the Turn of the 21st Century," in *Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah: New Insights and Scholarship*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York: New York University Press, 2011). See also Boaz Huss, Marco Pasi, and Kocku von Stuckrad, eds., *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Boaz Huss, ed., *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival* (Beer Sheva:

scholars have been complemented by American researchers such as Shaul Magid, Yaakov Ariel, and Jody Myers, whose thoughtful descriptions have contributed much to our understanding of the varieties of Jewish mysticism in the modern period. Together this band of scholars have demonstrated that Kabbalah has taken on a vast array of different forms, ranging from postsecular spirituality to novel types of ultra-Orthodox piety; all of these diverse movements, figures, and spiritual communities have incorporated or responded to elements of modernity, thus revealing that we indeed have a verdant web of new shoots growing forth from a venerated historical trunk.

That forms of Jewish mysticism, from the venerated Sephardic Kabbalists of Jerusalem to the transplanted Hasidic communities throughout Israel and North America and the New Age spiritualists of the counterculture movement, have thrived and transformed in the contemporary world is not entirely surprising. As notions of secularization as an inevitable historical process have become antiquated, scholarship has noted that the traditionalism of Jewish ultra-Orthodoxy is no less innovative than the modernizing reforms of liberal communities.⁵ The Secular Age, if we are to accept Charles Taylor's learned moniker, is truly one of secularization and sacralization alike, and often the boundaries between the two are ambiguous and porous. Moreover, the foundational works of Michel de Certeau, Leigh Eric Schmidt, and others have demonstrated the extent to which the very heuristic category of "mysticism," a category of experience or theology that spans religious traditions, is itself a modern phenomenon generated in the confrontation with the breakdown of medieval theologies and cosmologies.⁶ So the notion of Jewish mysticism (to be seen as a specific flourishing of a universal human phenomenon) might be described as being just as modern as the variety of other religious and spiritual phenomena housed in this scholastic big tent.

Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2011); Roni Weinstein, *Kabbalah and Jewish Modernity* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2016); Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁵ See Michael K. Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition," in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 23–84, and the many studies referenced in his notes.

⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, vol. 1, *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); and Michael K. Silber, *The Mystic Fable*, vol. 2, *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Luce Giard and trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Leigh Eric Schmidt, "The Making of Modern 'Mysticism,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, no. 2 (2003): 273–302. See also Boaz Huss, "The Mystification of the Kabbalah and the Modern Construction of Jewish Mysticism," *BGU Review* 2 (2008), "Spirituality: The Emergence of a New Cultural Category and Its Challenge to the Religious and the Secular," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 29, no. 1 (2014): 47–60, and "The Sacred is the Profane, Spirituality is not Religion," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 27, no. 2 (2015): 97–103.

Jonathan Garb is among the vanguard of this new generation of researchers advancing a new paradigm of modern Kabbalah. An Israeli scholar of prominence and renown, Garb's academic project of the past two decades has creatively incorporated the methods of phenomenology, philology, and historiography into a range of studies spanning from the thirteenth to the twenty-first centuries. His works combine penetrating textual analysis with broad, conceptual understanding, while remaining ever vigilant of the necessity to consider historical context when unpacking the written sources of Jewish mysticism.⁷ Garb's writings, at once sophisticated and approachable, appear in both Hebrew and English. This linguistic grace is a blessing of his bicultural heritage, a fact reflected also in his immersion in the works of Israeli and English-language academic scholarship alike. This sort of cultural fluency cannot be taken for granted in the heavily bifurcated world of Jewish studies. Garb's scholarship often draws upon the best of elements of both academic communities, thus overcoming the provincialism—often parochialism—of Israeli research, while delivering a depth of textual engagement that has become all too rare in contemporary American Jewish studies.

Garb's excellent new book *Yearnings of the Soul: Psychological Thought in Modern Kabbalah* advances the study of Jewish mysticism in several important directions. Some scholars change a disciplinary field by drawing attention to forgotten or neglected sources, thus demonstrating that the regnant paradigm is erroneously based on incomplete data. To this end Garb points the reader toward many important contemporary kabbalistic thinkers, such as R. Tsevi Yisra'el Tau of Jerusalem, R. Yitshak Meir Morgenstern, and his mentor R. Moshe Schatz, whose writings and communities are barely known in the academic world. Garb leads us into relatively uncharted territory, showing his readers aspects of modern Kabbalah literature that have been largely untouched. Much of the recent scholarship is invested in reinterpreting—and sometimes just rehashing—the same old texts, with understandably diminishing results. Garb sets out to reveal the staggering diversity of modern Kabbalah, a case study that he then uses to illuminate the broader issue of multiple Jewish experiences of modernity. In *Yearnings of the Soul* we encounter thinkers from streams of contemporary Jewish mysticism that offer new combinations of New Age spirituality, nationalism, ultra-Orthodoxy, and antinomianism, occasionally finding them all within the works of a single author. Garb has given us a new genealogy and accounting of Kabbalah

⁷ See Jonathan Garb, *The Chosen Will Become Herds: Studies in Twentieth-Century Kabbalah*, trans. Yaffah Berkovits-Murciano (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), *Shamanic Trance in Modern Kabbalah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), "The Modernization of Kabbalah: A Case Study," *Modern Judaism* 30, no. 1 (2010): 1–22, and "Mystical and Spiritual Discourse in the Contemporary Ashkenazi Haredi worlds," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 9, no. 1 (2010): 17–36. Important works by Garb currently available only in Hebrew include *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), and *Kabbalist in the Heart of the Storm* (Tel Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 2014).

in the modern world, charting its diachronic progress and various influences from the sixteenth century to the present day.

But researchers may also change the rules of their field by transforming the way that other scholars see well-known or foundational texts. I should add that this tack is often even more difficult than uncovering forgotten sources, the innovation of which is more readily visible. Throughout *Yearnings of the Soul* Garb revisits many well-known favorites of modern kabbalistic literature, demonstrating that they hold a wealth of hitherto ungarnered insights. Offering something to the specialist and the educated nonexpert alike, Garb accomplishes his goal by expanding the interpretive context of these sources beyond that afforded them by the abstracted domain of the “history of Jewish thought,” or by bringing them into dialogue with other contemporary sources.

These new interpretations of old wellsprings, Garb suggests, are neither fanciful nor overly creative. They emerge quite plainly as scholars stop forcing texts to conform to their preexistent interpretive frames. Garb is fiercely intolerant of anachronism and the projection of contemporary ideas into earlier strands of Jewish mysticism.⁸ He notes that while we must recognize that all scholars have agendas, and that readers have an integral role in shaping the encounter with a text (à la Ricoeur), it is crucial for us to identify and move beyond these biases to the extent that we are able: “The richness of the texts will expose itself, in the language of phenomenology, only to researchers whose tools are fine and whose approach to the text is subtle. Needless to say, ideological agendas, whether apologetic (as in the case of Haredi writing) or Zionist preclude such an approach by necessity” (77). Garb calls for scholars to engage with the primary sources of modern Kabbalah on their own terms, as it were, neither overlaying the sources with a façade of predetermined concepts nor engaging in wanton comparison between texts of different traditions or historical contexts. He eschews, for example, reading Hasidic homilies only as if they were addressed to a twenty-first-century Israeli or American audience, and nationalist interpretations of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook in a purely Zionist context (100; see also 150). Only through painstaking attentiveness to the subtleties of modern kabbalistic literature will the true diversity of its ideas shine through.

Garb’s new book is a rich work, saturated with a dizzying array of scarcely known primary sources and a wide variety of literary theory and religious studies. These references are nearly overwhelming at times, but the author never appears to be trying to smother the reader or name-drop in order to add flavor and gravitas. Garb is genuinely attempting to enrich the field of

⁸ See also Boaz Huss, “The Theologies of Kabbalah Research,” *Modern Judaism* 34, no. 1 (2014): 3–26; and the very insightful rejoinder by Daniel Reiser, “Historicism and/or Phenomenology in the Study of Jewish Mysticism: Imagery Techniques in the Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira as a Case Study,” *Modern Judaism* 36, no. 1 (2016): 67–82.

Jewish studies with creative paradigms and insights gleaned from critical theory, psychology and, to a lesser degree, philosophy. Kabbalah and Hasidism, Garb notes, are generally studied primarily within the isolated purview of Jewish intellectual or social history. *Yearnings of the Soul* seeks to broaden the points of connection between Jewish studies and the broader world of humanities scholarship. And looking beyond the pale of Jewish studies, Garb writes that he hopes the book will “contribute somewhat towards a fuller integration of religious studies and the social sciences, an interrelationship presently confined mostly to current phenomena” (21). Like the work of his colleague and collaborator Philip Wexler,⁹ Garb seeks to cross disciplinary lines and develop a rapport between Jewish and religious studies, on one hand, and anthropology, psychology, education, and history, on the other.

Garb’s exploration of the interface between Kabbalah and modern psychology, the heart of his new book, takes place in this fertile ground between disciplinary worlds. He seeks to chart the impact of psychology upon Kabbalah, since “the very shift to a more psychological discourse was one of the markers of the interaction between the Kabbalists and the modern world at large. In other words, Kabbalah partakes of modernization qua psychologization” (14). Beginning in the sixteenth century, as Garb tells the story, the origins of modern Kabbalah begins in the psychological elements of Safed spirituality.¹⁰ But the more original element of Garb’s thesis approaches this question from the opposite perspective: “Kabbalah being a source of modern psychological theory and not merely another domain in which it may be applied” (129). Beyond the easily evinced fact that modern Kabbalah has continuously responded to and incorporated elements of psychology, Garb believes that the vector arrow of influence extends in the opposite direction as well: the development of the discipline of psychology (and its various offshoots and influences) reflects elements inspired by the texts of Jewish mysticism. In particular this has been the phenomenon Garb calls “the return of the soul,” a sustained reclamation of the soul as a locus of central importance for psychology. He steadily maintains, however, that modern Kabbalah and its psychological aspects should be interpreted on their own terms rather than projected through the lens of Western psychology. Once understood, Garb argues, Kabbalah may once more serve as a resource for psychological thought.

Mapping the lineage of modern Kabbalah and its relationship to the medieval world is a tricky issue that begins with the question of periodization: does modern Kabbalah begin with the Safed mysticism of the sixteenth

⁹ Philip Wexler, *Mystical Sociology: Toward a Cosmic Social Theory* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013); and Philip Wexler and Jonathan Garb, *After Spirituality: Studies in Mystical Traditions* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

¹⁰ This point is anticipated by Arthur Green in his introduction to *Jewish Spirituality: From the Sixteenth Century Revival to the Present* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), xii–xiii.

century, the false messianism of Shabbatai Tsevi in the seventeenth century, or the emergence of Hasidic renewal in the eighteenth? Arguments for one of these stages as a harbinger of Jewish modernity can and have been made in the past. Garb's own opinion, convincingly argued in the present work, is that the Safed revolution and the psychological turn that emerges in the teachings of Moses Cordovero, Isaac Luria, and the other Safed pietists, may be described as the advent of kabbalistic modernity.¹¹

But Garb's quest for a useful model of the various streams of modern Kabbalah and their relationship to the pre-modern world goes beyond the search for a significant turning point or historical moment that gave birth to modern Kabbalah. Garb has given scholars a set of criteria, which he has developed over several recent works and here presented in a more refined way.¹² Invoking the conceptual universe of postmodernism, Garb defines "continuous Kabbalah"—versus discontinuous, as we shall see—according to the following six points (enumerated here for the sake of clarity):

1. relationship, in exegesis as well as in self-modeling on biography, to the classical modern Kabbalists;
2. connection to other branches of traditional Jewish life and learning;
3. conversely, the disengagement from non-Jewish discourse (reflecting the nationalization of modern Kabbalah);
4. strong emphasis on theurgical practice related to the traditional liturgy;
5. a marked tendency towards esotericism; and
6. a limited, usually negative response to current historical events (104–5).

Garb argues that many of the largely heuristic terms commonly used in scholarship on contemporary Kabbalah, such as "traditional," "radical," "conservative," "neo-," and so forth, are particularly difficult to define and thus tend to obfuscate more than they illuminate. His alternative rubric allows researchers to plot a far more nuanced understanding the various forms of modern Kabbalah vis-à-vis their earlier antecedents. Garb notes that these defining characteristics are present in the inverse in what he calls "discontinuous Kabbalah," and across the board Garb himself emphasizes discontinuity over continuity, seeking out "fissures, dislocations, and displacements, rather than assuming smoother processes that proceed heedless of

¹¹ See Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), a work that Garb suggests leaves room for a more holistic integration of the theological, devotional, and psychological elements of Safed Kabbalah.

¹² Jonathan Garb, "Contemporary Kabbalah and Classical Kabbalah: Breaks and Continuities," in *After Spirituality: Studies in Mystical Traditions*, ed. Philip Wexler and Jonathan Garb (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 19–46.

the turbulence of history" (105; see also 135). That is, even figures herein described as the continuous Kabbalists of the contemporary world have been subject to revolutions and transformations and embody an inherent discontinuous turn simply by dint of the fact that they (and their immediate forbearers) have undergone the revolutions of modernity. In fact, even the most traditional (or continuous) of these present day writers and figures live in the wake of two transformative discontinuities: the first being the shift to modernity in Safed Kabbalah, and the second being that of the twentieth century.

This interesting framing of continuous versus discontinuous Kabbalah is one of the most helpful methodological advances of Garb's project. It allows the scholar to highlight with precision the distinct characteristics in each of the modern kabbalistic streams, and it offers a useful set of criteria for grouping different mystical thinkers or movements together based on similarities and affinities, not simply intellectual lineage, the proximity of certain historical influences, or geographical propinquity. Moreover, Garb's criteria can surely serve as a useful model for other scholars of religion. Many of these same points could be successfully cross-applied to modern manifestations of other faith and cultural traditions, mystical or not, and thus provide a constructive rubric of comparison that can still be tightly controlled on philological and historical grounds.

FIRST STEPS

The expansive scope and the conceptual clarity of Garb's ambitious volume ensure that it will remain a valuable cairn demarcating the trail for upcoming scholarship and research. To have accomplished this in less than two hundred pages of writing, notes excluded, is itself a worthy accomplishment. Although the brevity of this work means that Garb cannot always do the kind of close textual interpretation at which he excels, *Yearnings of the Soul* is an absorbing, interdisciplinary prolegomenon that will stimulate further research and spur on the quest for knowledge. But in some ways *Yearnings of the Soul* demonstrates precisely how much untrodden ground there remains in the field of Jewish mysticism. Pointing the direction for future work, including his own, Garb makes no pretense about covering all worlds in a slim and welcoming volume.

This produces some surprising lacunae in Garb's treatment of the contemporary period. I would, for example, have wished to see him extend his discussion to the work of Hillel Zeitlin, a fascinating twentieth-century mystic about whom Garb is essentially silent.¹³ This is a shame, for Zeitlin was an interesting writer whose influences included Nietzsche, Spinoza, and William James, and perhaps other unnamed religious and psychological

¹³ Garb, *Chosen Will Become Herds*, 15, briefly notes Zeitlin's importance.

thinkers. Zeitlin combined these ideas with the traditions of Jewish mysticism in order to inspire spiritual renewal of Jewish life, yielding a rebirth grounded in the soul-centered vocabulary, psychology, and theology of Hasidism. Zeitlin was also a stirring poet who penned works in Hebrew and Yiddish and who adapted the Jewish love songs to God, as well as the language of the soul of Christian mystics, whose influence he readily acknowledged.¹⁴ And in his 1913 Hebrew essay “In the Soul’s Secret Place” (Be-Hevyon ha-Neshamah), Zeitlin compares the devotion of Hasidic mysticism with the enduring human and spiritual issues at the heart of Goethe’s oeuvre:

Goethe was right in saying that were the human soul not sunlike, it would not rejoice and exult so greatly in encountering the sun’s rays. So too are we justified in saying that were the soul not godly, it would not rejoice and exult so much, it would not press to break right out of its sheathing whenever one begins to talk with it about a secret light, hidden behind endless veils.

Rather—“For with You is the source of light; in Your light we see light” (Ps. 36:10). Because the sublime source flows within us, because the supreme light shines within us, we see light.¹⁵

Zeitlin affirms that the human soul is an element of divinity incarnate in the physical body, and therefore we recognize the aspects of God inborn in all elements of the cosmos. This divine vitality is present in the physical world, and indeed in all other people, and the human awakening to this divine inner reality allows joy and gladness to ring forth. This essay was a response to William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience*, a work Zeitlin would have known in Russian translation and that was hugely instrumental in his return to Jewish study and scholarship.¹⁶

Would Garb cast Hillel Zeitlin as a discontinuous or continuous Kabbalist? He fulfills perhaps five of the six criteria that define continuous Kabbalah, diverging only because of his constant engagement with Western philosophy and literature. Committed to Jewish practice if not to the orthodoxy of mid-twentieth-century Warsaw, Zeitlin was deeply theurgic (he sought to avert the calamity of the German invasion through prayer, and called a special devotional meeting shortly before the Warsaw Ghetto was destroyed), and he was intensely aware of current historical events—some of which he viewed quite positively. But Zeitlin was a liminal figure in so many ways that he belies easy classification even within a fluid spectrum such as Garb’s. I’m

¹⁴ See especially Zeitlin, *Hasidic Spirituality*, 218. It is worth noting that Zeitlin introduces this poem as follows: “From the song of Simon the Theologian found in Martin Buber’s book *Ecstatic Confessions*—with changes and abridgments and removal of passages based on Christian dogma.”

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁶ See Green’s notes, *ibid.*, 119. Zeitlin himself remarks, “I need light. I desire *to understand* and *to recognize* the religious. The ‘light’ of theology and that of metaphysics have not shown me my God. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* has shown me Divinity. But still, who can construct a *science* regarding the One?” (127).

not entirely convinced that this model is more helpful for scholars than simply noting Zeitlin's own self-presentation as creating "a Hasidism for the future."

This leads us to the point that Zeitlin's erstwhile social project is also quite germane to the present work. Garb claims that, "the formation of [a] circle focused on charismatic individuals is one of the characteristics of modern Kabbalah" (79; see also 29). Zeitlin, in fact, attempted to do just this by founding a devotional fellowship in Warsaw.¹⁷ He should be understood as a uniquely modern mystic, one who read the Zohar, Lurianic writings, and Hasidic texts in light of the works of Oscar Wilde, Hegel, Leibniz, Goethe, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, and Mikhah Yosef Berdyczewski. Zeitlin was concerned with the life of the spirit, the yearnings of the soul, and the psychological turn of Kabbalah in the teachings of Hasidism and the Safed mystics. So why not mention him more?

I find it equally strange that we meet only briefly the important figure of Abraham Joshua Heschel. Garb compares Heschel to Henri Corbin, the great French scholar of Sufism and Islamic spirituality, saying little more than that Heschel "made similar moves in inserting Hasidism into American spirituality in the mid-twentieth century" (141). Yet Heschel's influential works, evinced in essays such as "To Save a Soul" (*Piku'ah Neshamah*), describe in original terms the inviolate spiritual nature of the human soul and its capacity for depth, self-transcendence, and uplift.¹⁸ David Barnard has explored Heschel's opposition to psychology as a theological enterprise, but this should not exclude him from a central place in the refocusing on the soul in contemporary Jewish—and indeed, American—society.¹⁹ Heschel's vast writings, beginning with his beautiful and introspective Yiddish poems, which blur the lines between secular and the sacral, adapt the language of Hasidic soulfulness.

Why does a book on modern Kabbalah neglect such thinkers but refer to Professors Xavier and Dumbledore? Nor does Garb deal significantly with the works of Arthur Green, one of Heschel's key disciples and a leading Jewish mystical theologian, or Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Shlomo Carlebach, complicated and brilliant spiritual leaders who effectively created Neo-Hasidism in postwar America.

I suspect that there is an implicit focus on Israeli figures in Garb's scholarship on the postwar flourishing of Jewish spirituality. Perhaps this is un-

¹⁷ Arthur Green and Ariel Evan Mayse, "The Great Call of the Hour: Hillel Zeitlin's Yiddish Writings on *Yavneh*," *In Geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies* (2016), <https://ingeveb.org/articles/the-great-call-of-the-hour-hillel-zeitlins-yiddish-writings-on-yavneh>.

¹⁸ Abraham Joshua Heschel, "*Pikuach Neshama*: To Save a Soul," in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996), 54–67.

¹⁹ David Barnard, "Abraham Heschel's Attitude toward Religion and Psychology," *Journal of Religion* 63, no. 1 (1983): 26–43; and see also Alan Brill, "Aggadic Man: The Poetry and Rabbinic Thought of Abraham Joshua Heschel," *Meorot* 6, no. 1 (2006): 1.

conscious, but although American intellectuals and literary theorists receive frequent mention, Garb seems relatively unconcerned with serious Jewish mystics and theologians whose writings have defined a significant part of modern Kabbalah in North America. In the sixth chapter of *Yearnings of the Soul* Garb takes up the subject of American spirituality and discusses a few elements of continuous American Kabbalah (and especially in the context non-Jewish spirituality, but this focus is subsidiary to the heart of Garb's arguments sustained throughout the book. The Israeli skew is particularly visible in his discussions of the national (and nationalist) forms of Jewish mysticism, which he sees as "one of the prime expressions of the modernization of Kabbalah" (78). This characterization is appropriate for Rabbis Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto,²⁰ Abraham Isaac Kook, and many others; it is no exaggeration to say that the ideology of Kook's circle has changed the course of Israeli history. But the rebirth and reformation of modern Kabbalah has taken place in a very different way in an American society that gives pride of place to rough-hewn individualism, egalitarianism, and civil nationalism.

I concede that figures like Heschel, Carlebach, and Schachter-Shalomi have received some scholarly attention, surely more than the less prominent thinkers highlighted in *Yearnings of the Soul*. And Garb's point regarding the importance of sussing out these significant but neglected figures is well taken. But it is precisely in light of his interesting rubric for charting the continuous and discontinuous streams of modern Kabbalah that we could approach the writings of the American mystics anew. Garb's models allow us view their works not simply as American theology with Jewish trappings, but as vital, creative expressions of a renewal that is happening in America—in Israel—in very different ways. Such a contrast would have made for a fruitful excursus at the very least.

MASTER AND DISCIPLE: A MARRIAGE OF SOULS

Garb has argued for the circle of discipleship as one of the determining characteristics of modern Kabbalah. Though this organization is rooted in earlier sources and therefore may be seen as less definitional, I agree with him regarding the centrality of the master and disciples in modern Jewish mysticism. And it is on this subject in particular that Garb might have gleaned a great deal more interesting wisdom from the teachings of the late Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. Drawn in his youth to the charisma of both of the last two Lubavitcher *rebbe*s, Schachter-Shalomi became concerned with how that model could flourish in an American culture that val-

²⁰ I should note that Garb's discussion of national psychology cannot be construed as entirely due to an Israeli focus, since it begins with the Italian Kabbalist Luzzatto. My point is more relevant to his exploration of this theme's development in the twentieth century.

ued democracy and egalitarianism. He looked to develop ways of communicating the spiritual tools of the Hasidic leader to the contemporary American rabbinate. The relationship between master and disciple in Hasidism was the subject of his doctoral dissertation and several subsequent books, and Schachter-Shalomi spent much of his career cultivating and inhabiting his role as a living Neo-Hasidic teacher.²¹ The following remarks on the soul of the teacher come from one of his final works: “Spiritual prescriptions and guidance in the ways of Hasidism are given by one’s *rebbe*, a *neshamah kelalit* or ‘general soul’ who is able to locate and connect with the souls of individual Hasidim because they are part of the same ‘soul-cluster,’ allowing for relationships of deep spiritual intimacy. The *rebbe* gives his or her guidance to the Hasid in the private encounter, *yehidut*, and in public gatherings, *farbrengen*. In the past, the person serving others as *rebbe* was often indistinguishable from the ‘rebbe-function’ they performed.”²² Unwilling to give up on the special quality of the passionate exchange between a disciple and his *rebbe*, a Hasidic holy man and spiritual leader, Schachter-Shalomi argues that the soulful mentorship of a teacher is essential for modern (Neo)-Hasidim as well. While he makes room for other types of guidance that are more universally accessible, he preserves the vocation of the *rebbe* as a calling for talented individuals. But Schachter-Shalomi understood that the conception of a *rebbe* or *tsaddik* as a qualitatively different spiritual being would not work for many in the modern American context. Using a definition of the *rebbe* that is more psychological than metaphysical, Schachter-Shalomi describes to role of the *tsaddik* as a fluid category that describes a temporary way of being in the world. The office of the teacher is impermanent, certainly not necessarily inherited; it is a layered element of one’s identity that may—and must—also be exchanged for playing the role of the student.

Schachter-Shalomi, like many others Kabbalists both modern and medieval, understood that the soulful encounter between a master and disciple, a bond that is both psychological and spiritual, is no mere ancillary element of Hasidism. The student-teacher relationship is central to Hasidism, and to Kabbalah in general, and could have constituted a fruitful and important chapter in Garb’s book. He gestures toward this point throughout, and has dealt with the subject in previous books, but fuller treatment of this subject could have exemplified some of Garb’s central theses. For ex-

²¹ See, e.g., Zalman Meshullam Schachter-Shalomi, *Spiritual Intimacy: A Study of Counseling in Hasidism* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1991); Zalman M. Schachter and Edward Hoffman, *Sparks of Light: Counseling in the Hasidic Tradition* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 1983). Garb, *Yearnings*, 112, refers to Schachter-Shalomi briefly as an “antinomian” modern Kabbalist, though he emphasizes that Schachter-Shalomi was not entirely discontinuous, given that he was deeply immersed in the teachings of traditional Hasidism for many years.

²² Netanel Miles-Yépez and Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *Foundations of the Fourth Turning of Hasidism: A Manifesto* (Boulder, CO: Albion-Andalus, 2014), 14.

ample, in a footnote he mentions a sermon—better, a remarkable series of homilies—that should not have been relegated to the end matter (203 n. 30).²³ These teachings, from the important and understudied Hasidic leader Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Epstein of Krakow, explore soulful discipleship in the context of the transfer of power from Moses to Joshua (Num. 27:15–23). The sermons felicitously illustrate Garb's argument that modern kabbalistic (including Hasidic) sources prioritize mystical fellowship. R. Epstein's sermons reveal a remarkable attentiveness to the psychology of spiritual education, from the perspectives of the students as well as the teacher, which is grounded in an awareness of the centrality of the soul. Finally, moving forward some eighty years, these sermons feed directly into the educational philosophy of truly modern thinkers like R. Kalonymous Kalman Shapira of Piaseczno, a namesake and descendent of R. Epstein who was a vastly creative and important twentieth-century Hasidic master.²⁴

The reader should note a crucial point of historical importance here as well. This series of texts, together composing one of the longest sustained meditations on the subject of the student-teacher relationship in early Hasidic literature, suggests nothing about succession by dynasty or patrilineal descent. This structure of inherited leadership did not emerge as the rule in Polish Hasidism until the second half of the nineteenth century. Here, in the sermons of R. Kalonymous Kalman, the gifts of soulfulness, open-heartedness, and spiritual richness are conveyed from teacher to student. Only through this intense and loving relationship, fraught as it is with vulnerability and danger, can the heart of the teacher open up, filling the yearning student with a new measure of illumination.

R. Epstein's homilies are exceptionally powerful, but they are by no means unique in the Hasidic canon. In a classical work from the mid-nineteenth century, we read: "when a student greets his teacher, the 'two become one' (Ezek. 37:17). They face one another, the giver and the receiver, and thus 'become as one flesh' (Gen. 2:24), like one candle being lit by another."²⁵ More than intellectual synergy or collaboration, the connection between a master and a bosom disciple is intimate communion between two souls that merge temporarily into a single being. A focused analysis of the soul dimension of the relationship between teacher and student in Jewish mysticism

²³ In earlier studies Garb has drawn upon R. Epstein's teachings more robustly; see Garb, *Shamanic Trance*, esp. 91–95 and 79, 104, 114, 120.

²⁴ This impact has thus far received little scholarly attention. See Ron Wacks, "Emotion and Enthusiasm in the Educational Theory of Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira of Piaseczna" [in Hebrew], *Hagut: Studies in Jewish Educational Thought* 5/6 (2003–4): 71–88; Zvi Leshem, "Pouring Out Your Heart: Rabbi Nachman's *Hitbodedut* and Its Piaseczner Reverberations," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 47, no. 3 (2014): 57–65; James Maisels, "The Self and Self-Transformation in the Thought and Practice of Rabbi Kalonymous Kalmish Shapira" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2014), 301–6.

²⁵ Tsevi Elimelekh Shapira, *Benei Yissakhar*, vol. 1 (New York, 2013), introduction (unpaginated).

would have added another very interesting and illuminating dimension to *Yearnings of the Soul*.

THE SOUL OF THE LAW

Garb's seventh chapter tackles the relationship between modern Kabbalah and *halakhah*, or Jewish law, and represents one of his major thematic contributions. This is a welcome corrective to much scholarship of Jewish mysticism that has consistently downplayed, and even ignored, the variety of ways that nineteenth- and twentieth-century Kabbalists have conceptualized *halakhah* and underscored the importance of Jewish law in shaping the rhythms and patterns their religious lives.²⁶ Garb argues:

The centrality of the nomian in Jewish religious life, joined with its intrinsic complexity, certainly leave room for antinomian and certainly hypernomian manifestations, including moves that subordinate the commandments to the root of the individual soul. These should by no means be covered up as they are by some factions of Orthodox scholarship (also in universities), yet one cannot occlude the immense importance of the law in both life and learning. Claims to the contrary usually reveal anachronistic projects from the current situation, in which the law is less central for the life-world of large parts of the Jewish public. (150)

Elsewhere Garb tells us precisely which sorts of biases he has in mind: scholars whose research paradigms have been shaded by New Age spirituality or secular Zionism. Both of these have driven academics to read elements of the Jewish mystical tradition as a type of spirituality disentangled from commitment to and performance of law. This interpretation of Kabbalah has taken on different forms in America and in Israel, but the antinomian-leaning reading of Jewish mysticism is present in both scholarly communities. In his chapter Garb emphasizes the central vitality of *halakhah* in modern Kabbalah.

²⁶ See also Maoz Kahana and Ariel Evan Mayse, "Hasidic *Halakhah*: Reappraising the Interface of Spirit and Law," *AJS Review* (forthcoming); and Ariel Evan Mayse, "The Ever-Changing Path: Visions of Legal Diversity in Hasidic Literature," *Conversations: The Journal of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals* 23 (2015): 84–115. The Israeli scholar Levi Cooper has published several interesting (if preliminary) studies of the important early Hasidic leader Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady, a figure about whom Garb notes "neither in two books devoted to Rashaz (R. Shneur Zalman) published by academic presses, nor in previous general studies, nor even in the recent studies that finally bring into account all the generations of Habad thought, do we find an integration of Rashaz's work on Halakhah and Kabbalah" (Garb, *Yearnings*, 155). Garb contributes to our understanding of this crucial Hasidic master by offering a very important discussion of Rabbi Shneur Zalman's theory of *halakhah* and its kabbalistic background, but he too stops short of demonstrating the text to which his rulings were—or were not—informed by his take on Kabbalah. Cooper's erudite studies thus offer a complementary portrait of Rabbi Shneur Zalman and one that is much needed. See Levi Cooper, "On Etkes' *Ba'al Ha-Tanya*," *Diné Israel* 29 (2013): 177–89, "Towards a Judicial Biography of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady," *Journal of Law and Religion* 30, no. 1 (2015): 107–35, and "Mysteries of the Paratext: Why did Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady Never Publish his Code of Law?" *Diné Israel* (forthcoming).

Yet there is a crucial connection between the soul and the nomian found in Hasidic literature that deserves greater treatment than it receives in the current book. Garb offers his readers an excellent discussion of doctrine of soul roots, a theme that emerged fully in Safed Kabbalah and took on new forms in later Hasidism, but surprisingly he makes no mention of the role these soul roots play in the formulation of *halakhah*. I have in mind texts such as the following sermon from R. Levi Yitshak of Barditshev, a source exemplary of a wealth of other homilies on this same theme:

Regarding the disagreement between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, we have said that, “these and those are the words of the living God.”²⁷ A person understands the plain-sense meaning of the holy Torah according to his own attribute (*behinah*). If he comes from the world of Kindness [i.e., if his soul is rooted in the *sefirah hesed*], everything is ritually pure, permitted and kosher, according to the ruling his mind deduces from the holy Torah. The reverse is also true. If he is from attribute of Judgment [i.e., the *sefirah hesed*], then everything is the opposite. The attribute of Beit Hillel was Kindness, and therefore they offered lenient rulings. Beit Shammai were of the attribute of Judgment, and were therefore stringent. But the truth is that each of these, according to their level, are “the words of the living God.” . . . The sages that came after Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel saw that the world needed to be run with Kindness, and they established the *halakhah* to follow the leniencies of Beit Hillel in every case.²⁸

Sermons such as this, exploring the psychology of the adjudicator as well as the place of law in society, make a fascinating case study for Garb’s thesis. This particular source implies that different scholars will offer variant legal rulings even when presented with the same data, each constructing the *halakhah* in accord with his soul root in the Divine. This source highlights a fascinating element of the Hasidic legacy, namely, a supple and dynamic concept of the *nomos* as an expression of the psychology of the individual; this aspect has been largely forgotten or passed over by scholars. But sermons such as R. Levi Yitshak’s have nurtured contemporary religious thinkers who draw inspiration from Hasidism. This is particularly true, for example, of Schachter-Shalomi’s theory of “psycho-*halakhah*” or “integral *halakhah*,” which I believe represents a unique—and uniquely modern—synthesis of Jewish law, psychology, and mysticism.²⁹

There is another point of ambiguity in Garb’s chapter that requires some further clarification. The “soul of the nomian,” in his words, as expressed in

²⁷ b. ‘Eruvin 13b.

²⁸ *Kedushat Levi*, vol. 2, ed. M. Derbarmadiger (Monsey, 1995), *likkutim*, 479. It also offers an interesting justification regarding why the particular decisions of the school of Hillel were adopted as the normative practice, an explanation which runs counter to Talmud’s own explanation.

²⁹ Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Daniel Siegel, *Integral Halachah: Transcending and Including—Jewish Practice through the Lens of Personal Transformation and Global Consciousness* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2007).

the ritual practices of *halakhah* and the scholarly formulation of the law, is not necessarily identical with the immersive study of a sacred text, the subject to which a surprising majority of Garb's chapter is devoted. Scholars of Jewish mysticism have long been attentive to the central place of study, though they have been less adroit at capturing the import of studying *halakhic* works for Kabbalists both medieval and modern. But Garb has raised a broader question than he can answer in one chapter. Another way of continuing Garb's point of accentuating the nomian might be to highlight the soul- or heart-centered exegesis of traditional Jewish practices offered by the Hasidic masters.³⁰ These homilies often illustrate Garb's thesis about the nature of continuous modern Kabbalah, for they often interpret early modern kabbalistic texts by refocusing them upon the role of the heart in traditional Jewish practice. Such soul-oriented teachings flesh out Garb's thesis and provide an important new perspective on the place of law in kabbalistic spirituality for scholars who would downplay the importance of the *nomos*.

Particularly on this issue of the place of the law in modern Kabbalah, I find it all the more surprising that Garb has nothing from R. Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad, the highly influential scholar and mystic. Little has been written about him in any language, and even less has appeared in English.³¹ But his popular and highly accessible book *Ben Ish Hai* blends the realms of Kabbalah and *halakhah*, imbuing Jewish ritual practices with beautiful mystical resonance. In one emblematic passage, Rabbi Yosef Hayyim describes the spiritual import of reciting a blessing after eating.³² He emphasizes the capacity of human speech, and blessings in particular, to impact the cosmos and the Divine. When uttered in a state of joy and contemplative focus, words repair the rift between the different aspects of the Godhead by uniting the *sefirot*, infusing the divine superstructure with effluence and vitality. Our words have this power because God created the world through language, and human speech mirrors—or better, embodies—this same quality of sacred speech. And God's creative utterances have remained forever in the physical world as its spiritual essence; this infinitely present divine speech thus constitutes the linguistic soul of the very cosmos.

R. Yosef Hayyim's teachings, powerful but by no means unique, are a perfect example of the soul-centered nomian practices of Kabbalah outside of the immediate Hasidic orbit. The author emphasizes that the power of hu-

³⁰ See, e.g., the passage translated in Arthur Green, *Speaking Torah: Spiritual Teachings from around the Maggid's Table*, vol. 2, with Ebn Leader, Ariel Evan Mayse, and Or N. Rose (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2013), 185.

³¹ See Jonatan Meir, "Toward the Popularization of Kabbalah: R. Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad and the Kabbalists of Jerusalem," *Modern Judaism* 33, no. 2 (2013): 148–72.

³² R. Yosef Hayyim, *Ben Ish Hai* (Jerusalem, 1985), *helekh ha-halakhah*, *shanah rishonah*, *mattot*, no. 16, 311. I wish to thank my colleague Ebn Leader for drawing this source to my attention.

man speech and deeds to channel the divine energy is wondrous indeed. But the wonder, of course, extends to the fact that we lift up and heal the fractured reincarnation of other souls that have been reborn in the physical world because some aspect of the spiritual work remains undone. The simple act of eating, when performed within the constraints of normative *halakhah* and the accompanying blessing, is thus transformed into moment of divine encounter and cosmic interpersonal soul healing.

THE WISDOM OF EXPERIENCE

Recent scholars of Kabbalah have broadened the horizons of the study of Jewish mysticism by going further than Gershom Scholem in their use of phenomenology.³³ This trend reflects a growing belief among some academics that many important works of Jewish mysticism reflect actual experiences, whether or not they are explicitly described in the literature itself. They maintain that this is true of both complicated theosophical tracts and the relatively accessible texts from the Hasidic masters. These scholars use phenomenology to describe aspects of kabbalistic texts largely neglected by Scholem, as well as exploring the various techniques of attaining mystical states.³⁴ Of course, they do not believe that it is up to the scholar to judge the veracity of such experiences, but they argue that being mindful of the experiential element can remind us that Jewish mysticism is not abstract sophistry; it is a theology embodied in devotional practices performed by real people.

Yearnings of the Soul, following in the footsteps of several of the author's earlier works, places him squarely in the camp of those who affirm that Jewish mystical texts represent experiences.³⁵ In his discussion of the great twentieth-century thinker Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Garb notes that "Kook's statements are not merely poetical, Kabbalistic, or ideological. Rather

³³ See Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), esp. 1–34; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), and *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: 2005); Arthur Green, "Hillel Zeitlin and Neo-Hasidic Readings of the Zohar," *Kabbalah* 22 (2010): 59–78; Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, trans. Nathan Wolski (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), esp. 253–364; Garb, *Shamanic Trance*, 2–7, 17; Daniel Reiser, *Vision as a Mirror: Imagery Techniques in Twentieth Century Jewish Mysticism* [in Hebrew] (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2014), 67–73; Daniel Abrams, "Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism: Moshe Idel's Methodology in Perspective," *Kabbalah* 20 (2009): 7–146, and *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Cherub Press; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2013), 10–11; Ron Margolin, "Moshe Idel's Phenomenology and Its Sources," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 18 (2007): 41–51.

³⁴ Idel, *Kabbalah*, 74–111.

³⁵ See also Jonathan Garb, "Mystics' Critiques of Mystical Experience," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 221, no. 3 (2004): 293–325.

they express his intimate experience as a practicing mystic” (98). To interpret Kook’s writings as pure scholasticism or abstract rhetoric is to fundamentally misunderstand his works and their relationship to his own life and times. The same perspective, Garb suggests, should be applied to many—if not all—Jewish mystical texts.

The question of experiences hidden within and reflected by written texts also returns us to an issue related to nomian ritual, namely, the relationship between theology, knowledge of God, and embodied practice. Although many Kabbalists and Hasidic masters emphasized the importance of contemplative meditation, they also understood physically observing the commandments to be central for unlocking the heart and the human psyche, transforming the self and the cosmos through an infusion of divine illumination.³⁶ Works such as those of Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira of Piaseczno emphasize embodied practice as the key to cultivating an awareness of God.³⁷ The corporeal body is of primary, not secondary importance in the quest to develop an awareness of the Divine. Without the physical home for the soul and the body to perform the commandments, the mystic lacks the tools and vessels necessary for cultivating his inner world and transforming the “external knowledge” stemming from arid contemplation into an embodied, holistic sort of spiritual attainment.

Returning to the aforementioned teachings of R. Kalonymous Kalman Epstein of Krakow on the spiritual teacher, I find it impossible to believe that he did not understand the complexities of this intimate encounter between master and disciple from both perspectives. He was a devoted disciple of Rabbi Elimelekh of Lyzhensk, as well as a soulful teacher to the small group of Hasidim who gathered around him in Krakow. The powerful, nearly overwhelming experience of his own spiritual discipleship shines through these texts, alerting the reader (or the one-time listener) to the fact that his exegesis of the story of Moses and Joshua was also about the student-teacher relationship in his day and in his own personal encounters with his masters.

But the religious experiences of past saints preserved in sacred literature are not the only ones to which Garb refers. Throughout this volume Garb mentions in passing his own contact with contemporary Kabbalists and their students. He cites oral traditions that he absorbed in these circles,

³⁶ See Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), 1 and throughout; Seth Brody, “‘Open to Me the Gates of Righteousness’: The Pursuit of Holiness and Non-duality in Early Hasidic Teaching,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 89, nos. 1–2 (1998): 3–44; Tali Loewenthal, “The Apotheosis of Action in Early Habad,” *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 18 (1987): v–xix; Ariel Evan Mayse, “*Peri ha-Arets*: Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and his Devotional Path in the Context of the Maggid’s Circle,” in *Alchemy of Love: Hasidic Masters in Search of Homeland and Community*, ed. Aubrey Glazer and Nehemia Polen (Fons Vitae, forthcoming).

³⁷ See the thoughtful study by James Jacobson-Maisels, “Embodied Epistemology: Knowing through the Body in Late Hasidism,” *Journal of Religion* 96, no. 2 (2016): 185–211.

found nowhere in printed books, which Garb treats with necessary caution but nonetheless uses to illustrate points (see, e.g., 68-69). But the reader is left wanting to more about his involvement in these worlds, for this frankness is atypical for an Israeli scholar of Jewish mysticism in particular. Such description need not become ethnography or sociology, nor must it necessarily color his own interpretations and compromise his scholarship. But one gets the sense that Garb knows something more about the experiences that goes beyond what one may glean from books or as a spectator. This intuitive knowledge enriches his scholarship greatly, and perhaps he will share more about it in a different venue.

THE SITUATION OF JEWISH STUDIES AND THE SOUL OF SCHOLARSHIP

It is a curious fact that scholars of Jewish studies have rarely devoted systematic effort to exploring the ways, if any, that our field has significantly contributed to the development of method in our broader academic disciplines. That is, have historians of the Jewish people (whether social or intellectual) changed the course of historiography writ large? And have scholars of Jewish thought and theology significantly impacted the discipline of religious studies? The impact in the other direction, of course, has been obvious. Stephen Burnett has convincingly demonstrated the ways in which Jewish studies is indebted to, and in some sense extends from, Christian scholarly and academic mores.³⁸ Jewish studies is a hybrid and constantly evolving field rooted in ethnic and religious studies as well as the historical *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, but the degree to which there is successful transference of ideas and methods back into these parent (or sister) disciplines is not always clear.³⁹

³⁸ Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

³⁹ For a sampling of the vast literature on this subject, see Anita Shapira, "Reflections on the Rise and Fall of Judaic Studies," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 113–15; Arnold J. Band, "Jewish Studies in American Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities," *American Jewish Yearbook* 67 (1966): 3–31; David Biale, "Between Polemics and Apologetics: Jewish Studies in the Age of Multi-Culturalism," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996): 174–84; Susannah Heschel, "Jewish Studies as Counterhistory," in *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*, ed. David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susannah Heschel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 116–30; David N. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), "Was There a 'Jerusalem School'? An Inquiry into the First Generation of Historical Researchers at the Hebrew University," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 10 (1994): 66–92, and "Is There Still a 'Jerusalem School'? Reflections on the State of Jewish Historical Scholarship in Israel," *Jewish History* 23, no. 4 (2009): 389–406; E. E. Urbach, "The Changing Role and Status of Jewish Studies in Jewish Society" [in Hebrew], *Newsletter of the World Union of Jewish Studies* 17/18 (1981): 3–12; Aviezer Ravitzky, "Reflections on the Role of Israeli Institutions in Jewish Studies," *Jewish Studies* 35 (1995): 10–15; Shaye J. D. Cohen and Edward L. Greenstein, eds., *The State of Jewish Studies* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990);

Garb is one of the relatively small number of contemporary scholars of Jewish studies who are deeply invested in both sides of this question.⁴⁰ The study of Kabbalah has long been disengaged from the broader fields of religious studies, and from the humanities in general; this is true of scholarship in America, but the problem is infinitely more acute in Israel. There we find separate departments of “Jewish Thought,” where the study of Jewish religious and cultural literature—validated on its own terms for nationalist-historicist reasons of patrimony and heritage—was thoroughly cut off from the study of religion as a universal aspect of human flourishing. In many ways this legacy is reflected in the two sides of the titanic Scholem. In his own scholarship, and in particular the Eranos essays and lectures, he was aware of the broader issues of religious studies and the humanities. But the Zionist historian in him ultimately won out over the phenomenologist-comparatavist, and he too supported the isolation of Jewish intellectual history from religion.

Though this situation has changed in recent decades, Garb aptly diagnoses the issue as follows: “In much of Jewish studies, certainly in Israel, intellectual history is part of *historia shel ‘am Yisra’el*, or the history of the Jewish people. Curiously, the intellectual history Jewish mysticism is usually separated from even this parochial enterprise, as it [is] treated in an even more particularist framework, that of *mahshevet Yisra’el* (translated as Jewish thought). However, a more comparative approach should not lead to an opposite extreme of sweepingly ahistorical and translocal statements, also quite common in current Kabbalah scholarship, perhaps in reaction to the limitations imposed by the prevailing academic culture” (126). What is the answer to this quandary? How can we cross this “very narrow bridge” with provincial, narrow-minded Jewish studies on one side and irresponsibly panoramic studies of religion on the other? Garb argues for “controlled comparison” of modern Kabbalah, in which the scholar broadens his or her perspective to historical context beyond the Jewish community or body of Jewish ideas. This must be done, of course, without surrendering the importance of philology and textual precision. Now, perhaps in no other field of Jewish studies is the validity of comparison so hotly contested—even

Nahum Karlinsky, “The Dawn of Hasidic-Haredi Historiography,” *Modern Judaism*, 27, no. 1 (2007): 20–46; Harold S. and Paul Ritterband Wechsler, “Jewish Learning in American Universities: The Literature of a Field,” *Modern Judaism* 3 (1983): 253–89.

⁴⁰ Among his many insightful works on the interface of Jewish studies, religious studies, and the humanities, see Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the American Humanities: Essays and Reflections* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); and the collections of essays edited by Jacob Neusner, *New Humanities and Academic Disciplines: The Case of Jewish Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), and *Take Judaism, for Example: Studies toward the Comparison of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). See also Aaron W. Hughes and Elliot R. Wolfson, eds., *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); and Susanah Heschel, “Religion and Its Discontents,” *AJS Perspectives* (2011): 5–6.

protested—as it is in scholarship of Jewish mysticism. But Garb suggests that exploring historical contacts and ideational influences where such things are identifiable through evidence, textual or otherwise. In fact, “all contextualization should be comparative, as focusing only on the Jewish context, for example, is really a form of essentialism” (127). Dislodging the study of Kabbalah from its parochial niche, he claims, allows scholars to see the place of modern Kabbalists in the story of multiple modernities writ large.

We should note that Garb’s nuanced position that incorporates context and controlled comparison is still very much within the boundaries of intellectual history and indeed the study of Jewish religious thought, as demonstrated, *inter alia*, in the many studies of Alexander Altmann. The question remains, however, as to the validity of typological comparisons between religious figures and teachings without historical connection. The traditional boundaries of “Jewish thought” discourage and even preclude such juxtaposition. Garb signals the importance of such comparative work and highlights its crucial significance in bringing Jewish studies into the arena of the humanities. But on this point he is still guarded, revealing the extent to which his own formative thinking was shaped by departmental walls.

But Garb makes it clear that he set out to do more in this small book than fill a specific gap in our cultural and intellectual knowledge: he hopes to contribute to the cause of saving the soul of the humanities. We should care about shepherding this rudderless and besieged ship, says Garb, because “As academia becomes increasingly soulless and dominated by Weber’s ‘specialist without spirit, sensualists without heart’ (sensualists in the sense of market-driven materialists), all the more does the soul need to sing in joy, as the Hasidim, the singing-masters of the soul, have exhorted us. It is my hope that the readers had a heartfelt sense of the joy of writing this book” (168).⁴¹ Elsewhere Garb refers to the writings of Robert Sardello that address the notion that research itself is “part of the work of soul-making” (7).⁴² I could not agree more, and commend Garb for this bold statement about the spiritual importance of scholarly pursuits. Understanding that academia has indeed lost its way in many respects, Garb is challenging his readers to rethink the place of Jewish studies, and religious studies more broadly, within the humanities at large. As scholars we must continue to disentangle them from parochialism, for Jewish studies is not just a pale reflection of ethnic studies. The legacy of Jewish mysticism—and modern Kabbalah in particular—

⁴¹ See also Page Smith, *Killing the Spirit: Higher Education in America* (New York: Viking, 1990).

⁴² Garb refers to the important work of Robert Sardello, *Love and the Soul: Creating a Future for Earth* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2008); and also Robert D. Romanyshyn, *The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind* (New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2007).

provides scholars with a wealth of sources that have much to share in terms of reflecting upon modes of thinking, aspects of the human spirit, the progression and development of culture, and points of method as well.

But what are the contours that guide such personal investment in our subject area? What distinguishes passionate, indeed soulful engagement with the subject of one's study from a personal, nationalist or religious agenda? This question returns us to the first half of the twentieth century, recalling Franz Rosenzweig's advocacy for the lived, personal (though not necessarily "religious") dimension of all forms of Jewish study in the context of the Frankfurt Lehrhaus.⁴³ And, reaching into the origins of scholarship on Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem was himself far from a dispassionate scholar. His project of cultural reclamation was a rebellion against the rational objectivism of *Wissenschaft* scholars, who felt that mysticism was a peculiar parasite that had crept onto the trunk of a philosophically sound Judaism. Scholem wrote an alternative historical narrative, arguing that Jewish mysticism had been a living and creative force at the heart of Judaism for thousands of years.⁴⁴ And Garb's insistence on the "soul-making" of scholarship bring to mind towering figures such as Isadore Twersky, Michael Fishbane, Haviva Pedaya, Yehuda Liebes, Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, Arthur Green, and many others, each of whom have offered a unique vision of how Jewish studies may relate to contemporary Jewish life.⁴⁵

⁴³ Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1965); Rivka Horwitz, "Franz Rosenzweig—on Jewish Education," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (1993): 201–18.

⁴⁴ For an example of Gershom Scholem's indictment of the *Wissenschaft* scholars, see his "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies," in *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time and Other Essays*, ed. Anita Shapira and trans. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 51–71; David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); and the collection of essays in *Gershom Scholem: The Man and His Work*, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994). For a different reading of Scholem's role in the academic study of Jewish mysticism, see Daniel Abrams, "Defining Modern Academic Scholarship: Gershom Scholem and the Establishment of a New (?) Discipline," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 9 (2000): 267–302.

⁴⁵ See the recent profile by Carmi Horowitz, "Halakha and History, Intellectualism and Spirituality: Professor Isadore (Yitzhak) Twersky's Academic-Religious Profile," in *Torah and Western Thought: Intellectual Portraits of Orthodoxy and Modernity*, ed. Meir Y. Soloveichik, Stuart W. Halpern, and Shlomo Zuckier (New Milford, CT: Maggid Books, 2015), 249–80; Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Haviva Pedaya, "Giving Up on Holding On: An Interview with Haviva Pedaya," in *Hebrew Writers on Writing*, ed. Peter Cole (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2008), 305–10; Yehuda Liebes, "Some Thoughts about the Religious Significance of Kabbalah Research" [in Hebrew], in *The Path of the Spirit: The Eliezer Schweid Jubilee Volume*, vol. 1, ed. Yehoyada Amir (Jerusalem: Van Leer, 2004), 197–208; Irving Greenberg, "Scholarship and Continuity: Dilemma and Dialectic," in *The Teaching of Judaica in American Universities: The Proceedings of a Colloquium*, ed. Leon A. Jick (Waltham, MA: Association for Jewish Studies, 1970), 115–31; Arthur Green, "Jewish Studies and Jewish Faith," *Tikkun* 1, no. 1 (1986): 84–90, and "Scholarship Is Not Enough," *Tikkun* 2, no. 3 (1987): 37–39. See also Robert Alter, "What Jewish Studies Can Do," *Commentary* 58 (October 1974): 71–76. The question of Orthodox involvement with Jewish studies has been eloquently explored by Yeshiva University

Given this unambiguous call to arms and his desire to lead by example, and in light of the rich history of Jewish academicians who are involved in the construction of contemporary theology, cultural and institutional life, I confess that I find it strange that Garb's own place in this struggle still seems quite compartmentalized. In his work he refers to contemporary creativity and the engagement of the spirit in the chase of his research, but it is difficult to see how this is manifest in the scholarship he presents in this volume. With his broad vision and exceptional knowledge he succeeds in rightfully imbricating Jewish studies with the broader worlds of religious studies and the humanities. Though Garb is clearly eager to maintain a scholarly identity akin to that of Scholem, perhaps some indication can be gleaned from the rather intimate description of the practice of trance in one of his earlier works.⁴⁶ Yet I closed the book with a desire to know something more about Garb's process of soul making and the importance it might hold for contemporary Israeli and American life—inside and outside of the academy.

It should be noted that the crisis of the humanities is quite severe at Garb's institutional home, the famed Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Once a flagship center for the humanities, the Hebrew University has shifted gears and, like so many other institutions of higher learning, offers disproportionate funding to STEM subjects and leaves the humanities—including Jewish studies—bereft. It is still the case that we scholars of Jewish thought and theology who live in the Diaspora have our eyes trained upon Jerusalem for a unique type of scholarship that includes wisdom, innovation, and depth. Research continues, but fewer and fewer of its great scholars have accepted their place as public intellectuals engaged with the rebirth and continuation of a new kind of Jewish culture, a role to which they as knowledge producers are uniquely suited. Some of these researchers maintain this courageous perspective. But let us hope the Hebrew University can find its way back, and that its leadership and its researchers will remember the indispensable importance of the humanities in crafting a contemporary culture that is thoughtful, soulful, and ennobling.

Returning to our point of departure, *Yearnings of the Soul* is a valuable contribution to multiple worlds of scholarship. For academics working in the field of Jewish mysticism, Garb's work offers new directions for scholar-

scholars Moshe Bernstein ("The Orthodox Jewish Scholar and Jewish Scholarship: Duties and Dilemmas," *Torah u-Madda Journal* 3 [1991–92]: 8–27) and Shalom Carmy ("To Get the Better of Words: An Apology for *Yir'at Shamayim* in Academic Jewish Studies," *Torah u-Madda Journal* 2 [1990]: 7–24). See also Marc B. Shapiro, "Rabbi David Zevi Hoffmann on Torah and *Wissenschaft*," *Torah u-Madda Journal* 6 (1995–96): 129–37, and "Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer's Program of Torah u-Madda," *Torah u-Madda Journal* 9 (2000): 76–86.

⁴⁶ Garb, *Shamanic Trance*, 10–12. The same may be said of Garb's highly personal essay "Returning the Chairs to their Place: Buddhist Mussar Literature Faces the Takeover of Mysticism by Psychology" [in Hebrew], in *From India till Here: Israeli Thinkers Write about Their Conception of Judaism and India*, ed. Elhanan Nir (Jerusalem: Reuven Mas, 2006).

ship and helps to define the field of modern Kabbalah. It is also an important reminder that we scholars of Jewish studies inhabit a world of broader disciplines. The scholarship of Jewish thought need not be restricted to diachronic history of ideas within the unadulterated universe of purely Jewish orbits. And for scholars of religion, *Yearnings of the Soul* is a fascinating case study in the development of a tradition in a wide variety of cultural contexts; it is a rich tale of particulars with wide-reaching implications. Finally, as Garb hopes, it carefully declaims that Jewish studies, and the scholarship of Jewish mysticism in particular, can remind the humanities of their purpose and thus deliver them from irrelevance and eventual extinction. For the researchers, writers, and creators of knowledge in the humanities, and of religious studies and intellectual history in particular, scholarship need not be scholasticism. We must remember, says Garb, that our yearning hearts must lead us on a quest for wisdom and understanding. This is the soul of our scholarship and the greatest of gifts we can bestow upon our students.

Book Reviews

AVIOZ, MICHAEL. *Josephus' Interpretation of the Books of Samuel*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015. xvii+254 pp. \$112.00 (cloth).

Recent approaches to Jewish texts of the Second Temple period have increasingly highlighted the extent to which the authors of those novel compositions appropriated and reused biblical texts. This field of study now proceeds under the rubric “rewritten Bible” or, taking into account the lack of a firm biblical canon at the time of composition, “rewritten scripture.” With this book, Michael Avioz engages this burgeoning field, providing an analysis and convenient summary of the ways in which Flavius Josephus retold the historical narratives of the book(s) of Samuel in his *Antiquities of the Jews*. Although Josephus’s methods of retelling biblical narratives have been the subject of many articles in recent decades, there has been no systematic study surveying the larger trends in Josephus’s interpretive framework with respect to an entire book since the 1970s. Avioz’s book fills this lacuna and does so consciously within the rubric of “rewritten Bible” (3).

Avioz examines Josephus’s retelling of 1 Samuel 9 through 1 Kings 2 (*Ant.* 6.45–7.394), bifurcating the analysis into two sections: the “Saul Narrative” (23–56) and the “David Narratives” (57–164). If one were to judge from these sections’ unbalanced page ranges, it would appear to reflect a lopsided approach to a more equitably shared biblical text (in which 1 Samuel 9–31 features Saul to varying degrees, while David appears as the sole major actor only in 2 Samuel 1 through 1 Kings 2). This apparent imbalance, however, is more a product of Avioz’s method of sectioning; in reality, he treats both actors’ episodes as equally important. The appearance of imbalance arises simply because Avioz has collected all episodes in which David features in the “David” section, even if Saul is also present.

One of the major innovations resulting from Avioz’s identification of *Antiquities* as rewritten Bible comes in his application of method. Avioz is not concerned with Josephus’s role as a historian but, rather, his role as an interpreter. This recognition allows Avioz to develop a method more appropriate to the task: in each episode, he recounts the biblical narrative first, taking note of the textual and exegetical difficulties that have traditionally occupied modern interpreters. This familiarity with the text and transmission history of Samuel forms the backdrop for the ensuing discussion of how Josephus interpreted the text—filling in narrative gaps, spinning ambiguous or even negatively valenced reports, and circumventing interpretive problems. Avioz offers a final chapter (167–201) reflecting on the interpretive techniques that Josephus employed. Of paramount interest here is Josephus’s engagement with narrative doublets. Avioz shows that Josephus tended not to avoid doublets; in fact, he tended to preserve them, often for purposes of characterization (175). Intriguingly, Josephus does not seem to have borne the same equanimity to double versions when approaching alternate reports in Samuel and Chronicles. In these cases, Josephus usually preserved a single account, consolidating the conflicting details of his two sources into a coherent story line.

There are some points where the brevity of the study introduces complications: Avioz’s intentionally concise summaries of the biblical passages (and their constituent narrative gaps) sometimes flattens or oversimplifies the actual narrative. For example, at one point he states, “Saul is first anointed in 1 Samuel 9; then in 1 Samuel 10; and finally in 1 Samuel 11. Josephus retains all three anointments” (169).

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Although it is true that Saul is acclaimed as king (or king-designate) in three originally separate episodes, there is only one actual anointment (1 Sam. 10:1, part of the larger narrative in 9:1–10:16).

As reception-historical study of the books of Samuel progresses, many of this book's somewhat preliminary observations will necessarily be probed in greater detail. It will be necessary, for example, to develop a more nuanced approach to translation studies in order to differentiate more precisely those places where Josephus is preserving the gist of his source text from those where he is authentically innovating (see, e.g., models provided by Cameron Boyd-Taylor, *Reading between the Lines* [Leuven: Peeters, 2011], 267–83; and John Screnock, "Is Rewriting Translation?," in *Traductor Scriptor* [Leiden: Brill, 2017], 50–92, 184). Additional points of refinement might be reached in interrogating categories of interpretive editorial incursion such as "omission": what, exactly, constitutes "omission," and how rigorously verbatim must a text have been taken over by Josephus before we are able to make judgments concerning *omissions* as opposed to *simplifications*? Clearly, omissions at the lexical level (e.g., 145) pose separate issues from omissions at the episodic level. We must also ask whether purported omissions are actually attributable to influence from Chronicles (e.g., inclusion of Chronicles' "shorter version" of 1 Chron. 21:4 in comparison to the parallel passage 2 Sam. 24:5–7 on 182) or if this should be viewed as a mere case of "convergent evolution."

Equally thorny is the recognition of *implication*: are there positive criteria we can adduce to bolster claims such as "Josephus *implies* that its [i.e., the census in 2 Samuel 24] purpose was military" (157; my emphasis)? More complicated still is the question of how great a departure this putative innovation actually is from any subtle implications already embedded in the source text. These queries lead to the broader question of whether it would be useful (or even possible) to develop and include a more robust typological system for categorizing the editorial interventions identified in rewritten scriptural materials.

Although this volume is somewhat slim for the enormous scope it seeks to cover, it will undoubtedly be valuable to those researchers working in the "history of consequences" of Samuel. While certainly not comprehensive in the depth of analysis that might be performed, Avioz's study provides a handy compendium pointing the way to many places where Josephus's interpretations either diverge from or correspond with both ancient (e.g., rabbinical) and more recent attempts to grapple with the biblical text. I expect that this study will simultaneously model, inspire, and facilitate many future studies of the early reception of Samuel.

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BABB, LAWRENCE A. *Understanding Jainism*. Edinburgh: Dunedin, 2015. 176 pp. \$22.00 (paper).

As a reflection of the growth and maturation of Jain studies over the past several decades, the past few years have seen the publication of three good English-language books designed as introductory college textbooks. In 2009, I. B. Tauris published *Jainism: An Introduction*, by Jeffery Long. In 2015, Bloomsbury published *Jainism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, by Sherry Fohr. Lawrence A. Babb's *Understanding Jainism*, also published in 2015, is the third in this trio. Long is primarily interested in philosophy of religion and questions of interreligious understanding. The strength of his book, not surprisingly, is in his lengthy discussion of Jain doctrines of cultural and religious relativity, by which he aims to bring Jain doctrines more strongly into comparative studies of these topics. Fohr is interested in the many narratives that

Jains have told to account for distinctive aspects of the Jain tradition, with a strong emphasis on narratives related to gender. Whereas Long deals mostly with doctrines, Fohr deals mostly with stories. Lawrence Babb, the author of the book under review, is by training and disposition an anthropologist. It is not surprising, therefore, that his book brings into focus, in a way that the other two textbooks do not, the social location of the Jains throughout their long history.

Babb begins his book with a short telling of the life of Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth and last *Jina* of this period of time in this part of the cosmos, based on the *Śvetāmbara Mūrtipūjaka* scripture the *Kalpa Sūtra*. He presents it as a charter narrative, as it has an importance for Jains that is both normative and historical. The narrative shows how the *Jina* (or *Tirthaṅkara*—the enlightened and liberated “teachers” of the Jains who to a significant extent serve as the Jain God[s])—in his final life before liberation is at once human and divine. He inhabits a human body, and undergoes many human events, but is also predestined by his accumulation of highly refined karma to become enlightened in this lifetime, and at the end of it to be liberated from the round of rebirth. Among the acts of the *Jina* is to establish the fourfold community (monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen) of the Jains, and so the charter serves to locate the contemporary Jain community within the Jain universal history. When I taught with the book in my introductory level “Religions in India” course in spring 2016, my students greatly appreciated the clarity with which Babb presents and analyzes this charter narrative and the way that it serves to orient the rest of the book.

Babb then moves to locate Mahāvīra in “our history,” that is, the history of the scholarly academy. Babb describes the rise of Jainism in northeast India in the middle of the first millennium BCE and then traces the spread of the religion throughout India and more recently abroad. He also explains the various sectarian divisions. This historical presentation, combined with a chapter on the basic features of Jain ontology and soteriology, will allow anyone teaching with the book to place the Jains effectively within their broader South Asian contexts. Babb is stronger at presenting the similarities and contrasts with Brahmanical Hinduism than with Buddhism, but the book works well for both tasks.

Another chapter that was a favorite of my students was the one in which Babb outlines the Jain moral cosmos. As he rightly says, understanding Jain cosmology is essential to understanding the Jain worldview and thereby both Jain ethics and the Jain path to liberation. This is a biomoral vision of a cosmos teeming with visible and invisible life forms, in which every potentially pure soul has been ensnared in material bodies from beginningless time due to the wrong actions, thoughts, and intentions that generate binding karma. Coming to understand this worldview, and the consequences for individual and social life that orthodox Jains have drawn from it, proved to be a creative challenge to the inherited worldviews of all of my students and successfully asked them to consider the social and personal implications of what to them was a radically different worldview.

Babb devotes three chapters to a detailed discussion of Jain social structures. His description of the moral cosmos and the impetus to world renunciation in pursuit of liberation might lead to the conclusion that the Jains are misanthropic dropouts. His chapters dedicated to the Jain mendicant communities (“strivers,” chap. 4), their lay followers (“supporters,” chap. 5), and the broader South Asian social context in which Jains have lived show both how the renouncers lead lives that are sharply at odds with the material strivings and goals of modern global market capitalism and how the Jain laity, many of whom are successful merchants and businessmen, have successfully negotiated those seeming contradictions. In a short afterword, he touches on recent political developments in India, as the Jains were granted legal status as an officially recognized religious minority in early 2014.

I used *Understanding Jainism* as a textbook for a three-week section on the Jains in an introductory course on Indian religions in spring 2016. It worked wonderfully. I supplemented it with some short readings of Jain doctrinal, ritual, and devotional texts in translation. My students would have preferred more photographs, and on this point I strongly agree with them. It would be a great help if the publisher set up an accompanying website with color photographs to bring across the vibrancy of Jain ritual culture. My students wanted some introductions to actual Jains, to understand better how people live Jain values in the modern world. I found that showing Paul Kuepferle's 1986 film *The Frontiers of Peace: Jainism in India* served as an excellent accompaniment to the book and allowed my students in central Ohio to meet lay and mendicant Jains in Gujarat. But the readings and film merely supplemented the solid foundation provided by *Understanding Jainism*. In sum, Babb's book does an excellent job of fulfilling the intention behind its title, as it is an excellent introductory textbook on the Jains that is at once richly detailed and lucidly accessible.

JOHN E. CORT, *Denison University*.

BALENTINE, SAMUEL E. *Have You Considered My Servant Job?: Understanding the Biblical Archetype of Patience*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015. 312 pp. \$54.95 (cloth).

Samuel E. Balentine has established himself as one of the foremost interpreters of the book of Job with the publication of a number of articles and an important commentary (*Job* [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006]). His most recent publication on the book comes in the series *Studies on the Personalities of the Old Testament*, which according to the editor, the eminent scholar of biblical wisdom James Crenshaw, focuses on individual characters of the Hebrew Bible in order to "deal with a host of questions: psychological, literary, theological, sociological, and historical" (ix).

Balentine takes an unexpected, though illuminating, approach to meet the goals of the series as he focuses on the character of Job in the book of Job. Rather than simply engaging in historical-critical analysis of the book, he studies Job, the biblical character, through the prism of the history of reception.

Even though he emphasizes the history of reception, he does his own concise, though penetrating, reading of the text first in each chapter. The chapters of his book isolate different parts of the composition and the subjects within them. The first section deals with the prose parts of the book, prologue (Job 1 and 2; 42:7–17), in three chapters. The first chapter focuses on Job himself, the second on God and Satan, and the third on Job's wife. Here we can see that Balentine's focus is not unilaterally on Job but rather on all the characters in the book. The reason why Job's wife, a decidedly minor character in the book, has merited an entire chapter is due to the incredibly disproportionate role that she has taken right from the start of the history of interpretation.

The second section of Balentine's book examines the large middle of the book (Job 3–42:6). In this section, we find chapters devoted to Job's lament on the ash heap (Job 3), the trial against God, Job's friends, God's speech from the whirlwind, and an epilogue devoted to Job's children (from the epilogue, 42:7–17).

While each chapter begins with a summary statement of Balentine's own interpretive conclusions, the bulk of the chapters survey how interpreters from the very beginning (the Septuagint and the Testament of Job, for instance) to the modern period have understood the book. Balentine not only includes voices from the church,

synagogue, and academic guild, he also includes literary figures (Goethe, Kafka, and Wiesel), psychologists (Jung), and even artistic renditions of the character of Job.

As an example, I cite his treatment of the frame of the book (Job 1–2 and 42:7–17) in the opening chapter, which examines how feisty Job of the biblical book became a portrait of saintly patience by the time of James 5:11 and beyond. Balentine begins by identifying three interpretive moves that were necessary to complete the transformation. The first two (isolate the didactic tale and ignore the disputation section) are really two sides of the same step. His third step must be that by the time of James the audience “must know the word patience is a sufficient summation of the entire story” (16).

Balentine then gives an excellent account of the earliest interpretations of the character of Job that we have available to us, including the Septuagint and the Testament of Job (missing is a reference to Sirach 49:9 in the Hebrew), the latter of which shows an incredible transformation of Job’s character with the Septuagint giving hints of moving in that direction. Both the Septuagint and the Testament would have been available to James. Included in Balentine’s analysis is his incisive analysis of the relevant Greek words, particularly *hypomone*. The rest of the chapter concerns the “construction of the heroic Job” during the Christian Middle Ages by those like Tertullian, Origen, and especially Gregory the Great’s *Moralia* (sixth century). One can’t do everything, but it would have been interesting to see a treatment of how modern translations deal with the issue presented by James by turning his patient Job into a Job who endures (NIV, NRSV).

We now have two rather full but accessible accounts of the history of interpretation of the book of Job, Balentine’s and that of C. L. Seow (*Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013], 110–248). Of course, they cover much the same ground, and they both do so with great skill. They each offer their own interpretation as well (Balentine more concisely; note that Seow’s commentary of nearly one thousand pages presents only the introduction and commentary on the first half of the book).

In summary, Balentine must be thanked for presenting both his own insightful reading of Job as well as the interpretation of others through the ages for our consideration. He has written in a way that will appeal beyond a strictly academic audience to include nonspecialists, particularly clergy.

TREMPER LONGMAN III, *Westmont College*.

BALLENTINE, DEBORAH SCROGGINS. *The Conflict Myth and Biblical Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. vii+292 pp. \$74.00 (cloth).

Deborah Scroggins Ballentine embarks on a broad and ambitious study, covering texts from about 1300 BCE to 1000 CE, tracing the conflict myth of West Asia. In chapter 1, Ballentine delves more deeply into the issues of myth than is typical of such studies (2–21). The author relies on J. Z. Smith to help define “taxonomy” in relation to myth and explores the work of similar theorists to establish that myth is used for ideological purposes (6) and provides helpful nomenclature for the discussion (i.e., taxonomy of relationships, topos, etc.). Ballentine also shows biblical scholarship’s bias against “myth” (8–21; see, e.g., Gunkel, Cross, Day, Doniger, etc.) and identifies two ways in which the conflict motif is used: recasting characters from an inherited narrative within the mythical tradition or projecting aspects of the myth onto historical figures, like associating a human king with a deity to advance an ideological or political agenda.

Chapter 2 explores the conflict topos through the *Enuma Elish*, Anzu, and the Ba'lu Cycle. Each myth is summarized, and the interactions of characters in the conflict motif are analyzed with the more precise nomenclature from chapter 1. Details well known in scholarship are reviewed to show how the myths have political and ideological ends to support or dismantle particular groups. The author is well aware of the challenge in connecting a myth to a particular historical group, person, or context (27). Ballentine's strongest cases are made when nonliterary texts (like Neo-Assyrian texts of kings Shalmaneser III and Assurnasirpal II) reference a deity from the conflict myth to legitimate the human king (29).

Given the desired connection between myth and human kings, the dating of myths thus becomes important. For each myth, Ballentine provides reasonable dates with supporting scholarship. Ballentine thus follows Lambert's dating (1125 to 1104 BCE) for the *Enuma Elish*. Yet the very question of what motivated a myth could open up more dates, increasing possible connections. The peaceful Kassite period that Lambert and Ballentine assign to the *Enuma Elish* may not provide sufficient external pressure for the text to be made, compared to the Assyrian occupation of Babylon under Tukulti-Ninurta I. Simply, Ballentine need not settle on a single date to advance the conflict motif's use for political ends but could explore the multiple dates and the possible connections between myths and varying contexts. Such a gap is corrected when myths are adapted. For example, Ballentine's exploration of the Assyrian versions of the *Enuma Elish* and the connection to Sennacherib is a nuanced introduction that is a helpful corrective for biblical scholars.

By comparison, less can be said of the Ba'lu Cycle, and Ballentine is completely aware of this: historical—or “external evidence from inscriptional, ritual, and explanatory texts (while admittedly sometimes obscure)” (71)—is linked to the promotion of a specific king. While Ballentine's analysis of conflict between mythical characters or deities is always exhaustive (48–61), the claim in chapter 1 to explore “what myth does” is thus more difficult for texts like the Ba'lu Cycle. While many of the myths could have been used to elevate a king, the intention may have been broader. Many texts like the *Enuma Elish* are connected to a city rather than a king, whereas the Ba'lu Cycle evades political connections. Looking beyond kingship, the ruling priesthood could use a myth to support its own power in the face of a foreign king. Indeed, this is one of Lambert's rationales for a Kassite period date of the *Enuma Elish*. That said, few will disagree with Ballentine's strategically broad summations compared to where the discussion leads: “conflict myths exhibit a taxonomy of characters that authors and redactors manipulate in various historical and political contexts in order to promote their preferred deity, intuitions, politics” (64).

Chapter 3 more plausibly supports the main thesis by starting from the opposite end, looking through a smaller set of inscriptional and historical texts to uncover references to the conflict motif. Mari Letter A. 1968 and an Elephantine text, along with standard Psalms of the conflict motif, are each explored for their “flexible” (82) adaptation of the conflict topos. With the Psalms, the common reading of Yahweh as warrior and creator king is repeated, and the well-trod discussion of Yahweh's combat with the sea is summarized as another example of the conflict topos. Texts like Ezek. 29:3–5 show how that topos is used in the Yahweh versus pharaoh language, including discussions of Jer. 51:34–37, Habakkuk 3, Isaiah 51, and the temple in the Hebrew Bible, each with varying levels of allusion to the conflict motif. At times, clearer examples are used, like Adad's endorsement of Zimri-Lim through the motif (112–16).

Chapter 4 tackles the conflict myth from 500 BCE to 1000 CE with texts that add a distinctive eschatological lens to the motif. Daniel 7 and Revelation 12–13, 17, and 19–21 are followed with the Leviathan's function in 2 Baruch, 1 Enoch, and 4 Ezra.

Finally, chapter 5 looks at the calming of the sea motif in the Hebrew Bible, as well as its use with Jesus in the New Testament, Gamaliel, and Antiochus Epiphanies. While these examples still carry the main thesis, the opportunity to discuss connections between human affairs and the conflict motif in myth may be richer for texts like Revelation than the ancient Near Eastern texts of chapter 2, the latter of which take up more space. Revelation is treated in a few pages (137–43), with a brief reference to Nero, before moving on to the conflict topos with Jesus as the divine warrior. Perhaps the absence of major interaction with the non-Sectarian Qumran literature and the use of the conflict motif in that corpus, also in relation to Roman rule, could be a lost opportunity. Regardless, the broad conclusions are always accurate given the evidence, which “indicates that Judean authors adapted the motif to serve a broad range of ideological purposes” (170).

The discussion is explorative, suggestive, but careful in its final claims. The gains of each chapter build a compelling case for the ideological use of the conflict topos both within and outside of myths. But the primary value of the work seems to be in assessing the myths themselves; demonstrating the recasting that takes place within the myths and their later forms; and, in some cases, illustrating how the conflict topos was used for ideological purposes echoed in historical circumstances. In each case Ballentine has demonstrated that “issues of legitimate(d) and delegitimate(d) power are at the heart of the conflict topos” (189).

SHAWN W. FLYNN, *St. Mark's College*.

BILLIoud, SÉBASTIEN, and THORAVAl, JOËL. *The Sage and the People: The Confucian Revival in China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 352 pp. \$29.95 (paper).

This study of the Confucian revival in China in the first decade of the new millennium focuses on the anti-intellectualist appropriation and reinvention of traditional practices by activists from varied backgrounds and diverse social strata that constitute popular Confucianism “in the space of the people” (*minjian rujia*; 2). The multidimensional encounters between “the sage and the people” meticulously documented and illuminatingly analyzed by Sébastien Billioud and Joël Thoraval contrast with the textual scholarship and academic discourses hitherto associated with the Confucian revival, while simultaneously contextualizing the latter.

Two-thirds of the book examines the religious dimension of this popular Confucianism and the relationships between religion and politics in the revival of the Confucius cult and other Confucian rituals. Case studies of Confucian activists—how they converted or came to commit themselves to Confucianism and their endeavors in disseminating the Confucian ethos and promoting the Confucian way of life—not only present readers with the varieties of religious experience but also challenge the very notion of religion and other related modern Western categories—such as philosophy, science, politics, fine arts, and literature—and question their adequacy in understanding China today. Some Confucian activists explicitly reject the very category of religion, even though their experiences closely resemble other religious conversion experiences. The book explains how this rejection is understandable given the history of problematic adoption of the category since its introduction to China and, more particularly, how it related to the fate of Confucianism in twentieth-century China: from its rejection as a *jiao* (teaching) embracing all aspects of experience in favor of modern scientific knowledge, attempts at establishing it as a state religion, to its philosophical withdrawal to systematize and encapsulate Confucian ideals and wisdom in abstract philosophical theories.

Many activists claim a religious dimension for Confucianism, which is not officially recognized as a religion by the People's Republic of China. The study critically examines their various approaches in seeking recognition of Confucian religion in a post-Maoist era: (1) as a religion among other religions; (2) as a central component of syncretistic religious movements lobbying to be legalized; (3) as a "state religion"; or (4) as a "civil religion" resembling the American phenomenon (145). The second option and evidence of the important role Buddhism has played in the Confucian revival suggest interesting synergistic interactions among Chinese religions. Religious quests of Confucian activists face opposition from within and outside Confucian circles and must negotiate the tension between the desire for religion that may not materialize into actual practice and the reality of existing practices looking for an institutional setting, as well as the tension between an aspiration toward official institutional recognition and a claim to autonomy that distinguishes popular Confucianism, whose value lies in the people's beliefs and practices, from state-sponsored projects.

The authors are cautious in their evaluation of possible developments of religious Confucianism. Instead of crystal-ball gazing, they explore the possibilities of reviving Confucian rituals as the link between individual feelings and collective behaviors and between political authority and popular practices. In contrast to the official "rites devoid of ritual spirit" (223), during the top-down initiatives celebrating Confucius's 2,558th birthday in 2007, ritual ceremonies organized by grassroots Confucian activists at the Confucius temple in Nishan and the Mencius temple in Zoucheng a few days after the official festival testified to the existence of a true ritual community, rediscovering or reinventing Confucian rituals, mostly through ancient texts. The authors believe that it is the emergence of this new ritualism among the people that will pave the way for a ritual reconstruction of Confucianism. Despite the striking contrast captured in the anthropological study, there is no simple opposition between "popular" and "official" Confucianism in the book's nuanced analysis of the different overlapping spaces of Confucian revival sharing a "strategic equivocality" (230), which facilitates transactions and negotiations, both symbolic and material, among individuals and groups with a wide spectrum of different attitudes and objectives, each seeking maximum advantage for their own respective causes.

Recognizing the inadequacy of perspectives that reduce recent Chinese discourses employing traditional Chinese categories to ideological instrumental by-products of a state positioning itself as a new global hegemon, the authors set out to complement them with an exploration of what they call Chinese "continuism" (241), a perspective rooted in ancient *yinyang/qi* cosmology that does not posit any discontinuities between the living and dead, gods and humans, between the visible and invisible, between sociopolitical and cosmic spheres. Collapse of the Chinese imperial order characterized by this ancient cosmological perspective gave rise to discontinuities between the modern Chinese nation and the world and between visible and invisible dimensions of the universe through the new secular techniques of knowledge and governance. The different developments of these discontinuities, in complex interplay with the remaining influence of continuist assumptions, are explored through a comparison of varied politico-religious realities in mainland China and Taiwan. Neither the "ever-changing equilibrium between forces, be they 'religious,' 'political' or others" in the open and fluid social space of Taiwan, nor the "atheism" (273) imposed by the Communist Party in mainland China necessitating a compartmentalization of social space and giving rise to inevitable performative contradictions, can be understood within the common dualistic framework emphasizing separation and neutrality. The book shows how a more nuanced appreciation of the politico-religious realities of Taiwan and mainland China can be achieved by taking into account ancient Chi-

nese “continuism” without simplistically ignoring the impact of modern categories and the discontinuities they introduce into Chinese societies.

This is an engaging study of neglected, yet important, aspects of a much-discussed phenomenon that has thought-provoking implications for the broader understanding of Chinese politics and religion. While not the first to debunk claims that Confucianism has been reduced to a wandering spirit and that the Confucian revival is state-orchestrated (or state-dominated) and ideologically motivated, it provides new and convincing evidence from the actual practices among the people.

SOR-HOON TAN, *National University of Singapore*.

CHILSON, CLARK. *Secrecy's Power: Covert Shin Buddhists in Japan and Contradictions of Concealment*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2014. 264 pp. \$42.00 (cloth).

For readers familiar with the egalitarian soteriology of Shin Buddhism and the anti-esoteric disposition of its thirteenth-century founder, Shinran, the notion of covert Shin groups with secret teachings likely sounds odd and even contradictory. Relatively unknown even within Japan, studies of covert Shin have been essentially non-existent in Western scholarship. *Secrecy's Power* is thus a most welcome addition that explores a minor, but centuries-old, variation within the Shin Buddhist tradition.

In the introduction Clark Chilson succinctly outlines the major contours of the study of secrecy in religion, discussing previous scholarship ranging from Georg Simmel's foundational 1906 essay on the sociology of secrecy (“The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies,” *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 4 [1906]: 441–98) to more recent works, such as Hugh Urban's wide-ranging research on secrecy in esotericism, tantra, and Scientology. Building on some of Urban's critiques, Chilson argues that much scholarship on secrecy in religion remains muddled due to a lack of theoretical precision. Over the course of the book's five chapters, he makes explicit contributions toward clarifying secrecy as an analytical concept in the study of religion, which he demonstrates through his own case studies of covert Shin traditions.

The first important step in this direction is his formulation of a “clearer typology of secrecies” based not on the content of secrets, or what happens when they are exposed, but rather on “who the concealing agents are and how their secrets may be revealed” (4). To this end, Chilson proposes mystery, esotericism, and social secrecy as typologies to describe three of the most common forms of secrecy in religion. Mysteries are ultimately concealed by deities and denote “knowledge that is inaccessible and thus unknowable” except by divine revelation (5). Esoteric secrets, like mysteries, have origins that transcend the social world, but one can grasp their significance through knowledge of special modes of interpretation that reveal their hidden meanings. Social secrecy, by contrast, refers to acts of concealment carried out primarily by people, which, in a religious context, usually means the act of concealing practices and objects so that others do not learn of their existence. Forms of secrecy can and do overlap, such as when social secrecy is used to conceal objects containing esoteric secrets. Chilson demonstrates how an awareness of these differences can help prevent comparative analyses that incorrectly make overly general claims that do not apply to all forms of secrecy.

Building on these typologies, Chilson separates secretive religions into two categories: overt and covert. Overt secretive religions often possess esoteric secrets or maintain an exclusive membership, but they do not hide the existence of those secrets or the fact of the group's existence. Covert secretive religions, however, attempt to hide their very existence from the public through such practices as limiting visibility, dissimulation, and silence. Covert Shin groups are thus of a similar kind to sixteenth-

century Crypto-Jews and Crypto-Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula and, more interestingly, “hidden Christians” (*kakure kirishitan*) in seventeenth-century Japan.

The first chapter, “Secrecy Causes Criticism and Persecution,” details the origins of secretive forms of Shin Buddhism, which first emerged with claims to secretive knowledge made by Shinran’s own son, Zenran, and discusses denunciations of secretive teachings by Shinran and later Shin reformer and patriarch Rennyo (1415–99), whose writings many covert Shin interpret quite differently as recognizing and advocating a certain kind of secrecy. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries various *kakushi nenbutsu* (hiding the *nenbutsu*) groups pursued secretive practices in spite of the harsh criticism and attacks these practices prompted from Shin authorities. Their situation stands in contrast to the history of another covert Shin tradition called *Kirishimakō*, which emerged in southwestern Japan during the seventeenth century and forms the subject of the second chapter, “Secrecy Preserves and Transforms.” Amid persecution by the region’s ruling warrior class, who imagined Shin as a potential threat to political authority, believers pursued secrecy to avoid oppression and continued to practice Shin covertly. They eventually adopted Shinto-related practices centered on Mt. Kirishima in an effort to conceal their actual religious activities. While *Kirishimakō* practitioners largely succeeded in concealing their religion throughout the Edo period (1600–1868), their use of dissimulation via Shinto practices also had the effect of separating them from orthodox Shin Buddhism. Even after regional prohibitions against Shin were removed in the 1870s, members of *Kirishimakō* continued to maintain secrecy as a customary duty and never sought out a relationship with Shin temples. This case illustrates one of the author’s methodological concerns, namely, to focus not only on why covert religious groups keep secrets but also to interrogate the consequences of their doing so. Chilson paraphrases secrecy’s contradictory effects thusly: “it can both protect and lead to persecution, it can preserve and cause transformation, it can create dilemmas for which the proper response is unclear, or it can regulate action so that the proper action is unambiguous” (xii).

The next three chapters comprise the book’s second half and offer an in-depth analysis of a still-active covert Shin tradition called *Urahōmon*. These chapters showcase the author’s thoughtful fieldwork, and students of Japanese religions will appreciate the lucid explication of the doctrines and practices of this relatively unknown sect. Not unlike *Kirishimakō*, one lineage of *Urahōmon* has, since the late nineteenth century, practiced dissimulation by maintaining a relationship with a Tendai Buddhist temple, a strategy that has helped it evade suspicion sometimes directed at new religions by local officials and neighbors. The history of *Urahōmon* and its dwindling membership underscore the predicament that secretive religious groups face. Covert groups hide their existence to avoid persecution and to safeguard the secret teachings and rituals that form the core of their religion. At the same time, they must transmit those secrets to others, lest the religion cease to exist. Chilson contends that the dilemma most keenly emerges in “situations when the consequences of their secrecy are in doubt and when the risks of revealing and concealing seem about equal” (140). Within *Urahōmon*, this dilemma has been resolved largely by limiting authority to reveal secrets to the *zenchishiki*, the leaders of individual confraternities who are the only ones granted access to all the secret teachings. *Urahōmon* is thus characterized by what Chilson describes as “internal secrecy”—a covert religious group that also maintains esoteric secrets (174).

Research on obscure religious groups like covert Shin can easily yield studies that are interesting exercises in thick description but that have little to say to those in other fields. Chilson, however, has succeeded in writing an engaging historical and ethnographic account that meaningfully relates his findings to theoretical con-

cerns in the study of secrecy and covert religious groups more generally. This brief review can reveal only a few of the many fascinating insights this book contains.
CAMERON PENWELL, *Chicago, Illinois*.

FORTI, SIMONA. *New Demons: Rethinking Power and Evil Today*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015. 418 pp. \$29.95 (paper).

Simona Forti has given us a wide-ranging, nuanced, and thoughtful book on the relationship between evil and power. Despite some critical remarks below, this book deserves to be read not only by those with prior interest in the lengthy list of Continental thinkers it engages with but also by those animated to think about the vital question at its heart—whence evil? This is a question that Forti sees as precarious, since “the assumptions behind all claims to promoting the good—especially the political good—have been progressively delegitimized” in “our” intellectual age (1). Forti’s answer is an interesting blend of intellectual history, political and psychological analysis, and even a moral and political plea. However, this blend is also the source of some of the book’s problems, which I point to below.

It is only possible to state Forti’s argument in broad strokes here, although the many details and detours of Forti’s rich expositions of authors and texts are the main strength of the book. An influential tradition of modern thought has been caught in a flawed paradigm of thinking about evil and power. Forti calls this the “Dostoevsky paradigm,” typified in many characters and scenes in the works of the Russian author, but especially by Nikolai Stavrogin in the novel *Demons*. Stavrogin represents a character with a diabolical will; he is the embodiment of a profound nihilism who comes to desire and gain enjoyment from destruction and death. One theory of evil is that it originates in nihilistic Stavrogins who seek power by surrendering the moral rules that keep the virtuous and mediocre rest of us in check and exercise power over these victims. The first part of Forti’s book traces the intellectual genealogy of this way of making sense of evil from Kant and Schelling—both of whom could not yet conceive the possibility of such a diabolical will—through to Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, and Levinas.

Between the first and second parts, Forti discusses the concept of biopower and analyzes the link between concepts in the medical and life sciences and racial discourse in National Socialist texts. The interlude is an interesting digression, since it is here that Forti reveals a crucial weakness of the Dostoevsky paradigm. The concept of biopower helps us see that evil can result not only from a desire for destruction but also from the opposite: an unconditional pursuit of life and its health as supreme and unconditional values. She exposes the danger of blending biological and moral discourse through examples of those responsible for the atrocities of National Socialism, for whom the pursuit of health became a justification for violence and domination.

The second part of Forti’s book exposes an alternative theory of evil that is recovered from many of the same authors treated in the first part: Dostoevsky himself, Nietzsche, Arendt, Foucault, Primo Levi, and finally the Czech writers Jan Patočka and Vaclav Havel. She begins with Arendt’s famous portrayal of Adolf Eichmann to begin a fascinating tour through views that focus not on the moral psychology of diabolical individuals but rather on the attitudes of more mediocre demons whose complicity makes systemic evil possible. Forti argues that the true root of systemic evil is passivity and obedience, the “normativity of non-judgment,” which itself arises from the inability to “create friction with the present” (253, 203). One of the most provoc-

ative insights of the book is that in order for us to avoid systemic evil, we must be able to act against the desire for life *at any cost*. This desire for life becomes the target of critique, for it cannot imagine sacrifice, even of life itself, in order to challenge ethically unendurable conditions.

The strengths of Forti's book lie in her nuanced, engaging interpretations of the key authors that shape her genealogies and in her dedication to preserving the multivalence of their writings. But a problem lies in how Forti has navigated the trade-off between her genealogical project and the fundamentally ethical subject matter and aim of her book. It is clear throughout that Forti's aim is not only to tell the story of how evil has been understood in modern and postmodern Continental thought but also to tell us when this tradition was on the right track and when it missed the target. The constructive core of the book is a critique of the conceptual link between evil and power, of an obedient nonjudgmental attitude, and of the attempt to suppress or deny morally questionable impulses in ethical formation. However, Forti does not take opportunities to state more explicitly the ethical theory underlying her judgments, and this leaves underdeveloped her support and rejection of the positions with which she so carefully engages.

Forti does an excellent job bringing together a host of intriguing insights and historical examples that are worthy of the urgent tone that drives her genealogical twists and turns. One of her most intriguing claims is that "the fact of pain and suffering" requires us to engage in ethical thinking, and this means using the category of "evil" (1). But this claim is in tension with a critique of normativity found throughout the book and stated in Forti's almost defensive opening concern over the legitimacy of ethical thinking in postmodernity. Normativity of course refers to prescription and evaluation, in contrast to value-neutral description. Forti misses an opportunity to use her decidedly ethical subject matter and the compelling ethical insights that she pieces together to challenge her opening worry about the delegitimation of ethics and the suspicion of normativity. Indeed, the tone of Forti's book exemplifies her claim that we take our theories of evil and power to have the same moral urgency that we do the horrific events that she returns to throughout the book to provoke philosophical reflection. The connection between evil, power, and the lack of critical judgment that Forti draws could be as good an answer as any for why essentially normative reflection on ethical and political values is perfectly legitimate and why it matters.

PETER WOODFORD, *University of Cambridge*.

GRANEY, CHRISTOPHER M. *Setting Aside All Authority: Giovanni Battista Riccioli and the Science against Copernicus in the Age of Galileo*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015. 288 pp. \$29.00 (paper).

This volume aims to combat the popular hyperbolic portrayal of the Galileo affair as a battle between heroes, idiots, and cultists with pitchforks. As the author puts it, he seeks to reframe the question of heliocentrism versus geocentrism from one of science versus religion to one of science versus science (145). Christopher M. Graney uses the case of seventeenth-century opposition to Copernican and Galilean astronomy to show that there are reasons beyond obstinacy and indoctrination that might make someone oppose a new scientific model and that the seemingly obvious truths of modern science were not at all obvious when the only tools a scientist had to evaluate rival hypotheses were pen and paper, a rickety telescope with 9× magnification,

and the night sky. By elaborating the anti-Copernican theories of Giovanni Battista Riccioli's *New Almagest* (Bologna, 1651), Graney demonstrates how one of the most influential opponents of heliocentrism was neither a zealot nor a willful oppressor of the truth but a learned scholar who seriously evaluated all the data he could gather and who found much that seemed to contradict heliocentrism and support, in Riccioli's case, a hybrid geocentrism in which Moon and Sun circled the Earth while other planets circled the Sun.

In the book's initial chapters Graney summarizes, in accessible but ample detail, what background knowledge and observable data were available to Galileo, Riccioli, and other contributors to the Copernican debate, such as Tycho Brahe, Johann Georg Locher, and Francesco Ingoli. He then describes Riccioli's systematic experimentation, showing how he tested and rejected the vast majority of anti-Copernican arguments but remained persuaded by a few that stood up to the best experimental testing he could devise. Graney's volume thus battles earlier readings of Riccioli as a church stooge, arguing that he—like Galileo—worked from observation and method, not slavishly from authority, but that even the telescope, when its power was weak and optical effects were poorly understood, presented evidence that seemed to weigh strongly against Galileo.

Despite the volume's dramatic title, Graney does not address larger changes in thought and method in the seventeenth century, such as the rejection of authority spearheaded by Bacon and Descartes, the spread of scientific academies, or the fact that the kind of experimental science practiced by Galileo, Riccioli, and their peers was comparatively new and part of a larger revolution in how intellectuals evaluated the relative persuasive value of authority, logic, and sense perception. The book is instead a case study, seeking to prove that this opponent of Copernicanism was still a good scientist, without exploring why such scientists were debating these questions in the first place and without touching on the condemnation of Galileo or how these debates intersected with other aspects of society, such as patronage, courtly competition, scholastic education, the still-young publishing industry, or the Inquisition's efforts at information control. An unkind reader might accuse the volume of using its narrowness to paint an apologetic portrait of Galileo's opponents, erasing the Inquisition and its threats of violence, but that tale has been told many times. This book's tale, the tale of Riccioli the honest, systematic, good anti-Copernican, is new, and worth telling, and in the course of it, Graney frequently acknowledges the more familiar darker story and even depends on it as a presence in the reader's mind, to which he offers this foil.

While Graney's volume contains material of interest to specialists—especially the accounts of Riccioli's experiments and the edited and translated texts in the appendices—the primary targets of his argument are not specialists, and he favors accessibility over wading through the depths of historiography. Graney names students as his main inspiration for the volume—undergraduates who read about the scientific revolution and struggle to understand why truth would be difficult to recognize, why anyone would battle it except out of malice, or why anyone would be persuaded by appeals to authority over evidence. Graney quotes one student asking, "How can I look at the sky and see that it is blue, but accept some guy telling me to believe it to be pink, because that is what is in the Bible?" (xiv). Graney seeks to answer this kind of question by demonstrating that the question itself is based on an oversimplified narrative—plucky, truth-loving science battling grim, oppressive religion—a narrative constantly rebutted by scholars but just as constantly repeated in a thousand popular forms. Thus the ideal audience for this volume includes not only students but those engaged in discussing this oversimplified narrative with students, that is, participants in public discourse about the relationship between religion and science.

Particularly in America, the increasingly heated discourse around the Christian far right has made it more and more difficult to teach the scientific revolution. I remember grading an undergraduate paper in which a student remarked that she was shocked to find Christianity in the works of Francis Bacon because, "I always thought of science as the enemy of religion." Students come to discussions expecting adversarial and entrenched camps, and many come already wounded by personal attacks, whether on their faiths or nonfaiths. Theists and atheists alike, when subject to repeated intellectual aggression, sometimes develop a kind of defensive bitterness, emotional and intellectual wounds scabbed over by a reflexive presumption that any discussion of opposing views must be an attack. This reflex helps protect a wounded mind in hostile situations but tragically makes it difficult for real positive conversation to begin, especially in the classroom. Thus, one of Graney's great achievements in this volume is to contribute a tool, not to any side, but to the advocate of peaceful discourse. His snapshot of anti-Copernican science proves false the anachronistic claim that religion and science have always (or ever) been enemies in an uncomplicated sense, and he invites those who think they know the black-and-white truth of Galileo's travails and secular martyrdom to think again. His book is not a broad portrait of science's relationship with religion, and it will not fully answer his student's deeper question about why authority used to have a persuasive power very different from what it has now—for a student-level version of that one might look to the *Birth of the Modern Mind* lectures by Alan C. Kors (Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses [audio-books], 2013). But Graney's case study could help my students understand that science and religion are not enemies and may startle a few more students, readers, and even voices in public discourse into realizing that the Galileo affair was—like the bright speck spied through an early telescope—much more complicated than it seems at first (or even second) glance.

ADA PALMER, *University of Chicago*.

HUNT, MAURICE. *The Divine Face in Four Writers: Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Hesse, C. S. Lewis*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2016. xii+175 pp. \$100.00 (cloth).

Primary attention in this book is given to the role of faces, especially face-to-face encounters, in three plays by Shakespeare and three novels, Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*, Hesse's *Demian*, and *Till We Have Faces* by C. S. Lewis. The book opens with a discussion of faces and facial encounters in biblical, especially Old Testament, texts. It offers, at midpoint, a description of the myth of Psyche and Cupid in *The Golden Ass*. It concludes with a brief discussion of facial encounters in the work of Emmanuel Levinas and of some similarities between Levinas and Martin Buber.

The focus of the chapters on literary texts, while on faces, is often sharpened to a focus on eyes, seeing, and being seen. With equal frequency it often widens to characters as revealed in and by their looks and looking. The primary method is informal, conducting readers from the beginning to the end of each text and pointing out facial encounters, looking or being looked at, and characters' inner states as expressed in and by facial exposures. The biblical opening and the concluding comments on Levinas and Buber that frame the book substantiate the moral and religious interests that mark the treatment of the literary texts—interests related, it appears, to the author's own beliefs.

The interpretive readings of works by the four writers lead to the topic of facial encounters as revealing Christlike characters, Cordelia (27–28), Myshkin (57–58),

Demian (116), and both Psyche and Orual (123). This places the book in relations of similarity to studies such as Edwin Moseley's *Pseudonyms of Christ in the Modern Novel* and Theodore Ziolkowski's *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus*. Studies of this kind are particular instances of a more general literary method that relates particulars within texts to larger figures or patterns more widely found in the culture, a method prominent in the second half of the past century and identifiable as myth or archetypal criticism.

There are two questions that one expects such studies to address, neither of which arises clearly in this book. The first question concerns what is taken as primary, the paradigmatic figure or pattern or the instance of it in the literary text. The second question concerns to what the myth or archetype primarily pertains—the author, the text, or the reader; critical studies of this kind can emphasize any of these three options.

Addressing the second question first, one would expect, given the appearance of “writers” in the book’s title, that it will relate the pattern or figure primarily to the authors. But the chapters on the writers turn attention more to the selected texts than to their authors. However, primary attention shifts from the texts to readers encountering textual instances of what the title calls “the divine face.” A kind of transparency or revelatory potential is attributed to texts that allow readers to discern in human encounters the forgiving and caring face of a gracious God.

Turning now to the other question: do the writers give us characters or encounters that are similar to recognizable, even universal, figures or patterns in order to enhance their own creations, or do the characters and encounters they give us defer to the figure or pattern beyond or behind the text? By identifying encounters in Shakespeare’s plays as “Christian-like” (42), by invoking the background of Orthodox icons for Dostoyevsky, by being uncertain whether Hesse’s archetypes yield to something Christian or identify what is Christian with the collective unconscious, and by implying that Lewis’s fiction defers to something outside or beyond it, Maurice Hunt suggests that the looking, faces, and characters to which he draws attention grant the reader opportunities for seeing God. I take the author to imply, further, that faithful reading always requires being prepared to recognize the face of God in fictional and, by implication, actual faces. If this is so, I think it would have been better for the argument to have reversed the positions of the first and last chapters, beginning with Levinas and Buber and ending with the biblical texts and their implied authority, especially the words of Jacob on encountering his brother’s acceptance: “truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God.”

Readers, particularly those influenced by Levinas, will emerge from this book engaged more by its topic than by this brief treatment of it. So much is unaddressed. The roles of faces, eyes, looking, and being looked at are treated, from ancient to modern cultures, as essentially the same. Similarly, these roles are largely unified to provide exceptions to, even exits from, the course of ordinary experience and historical change. The reader may think of cultural changes in the roles and meanings of faces: of seeing them created by the invention of mirrors as we know them in the sixteenth century and the self-images they provide; of portraiture and attention to the social status of subjects secured by clothing and furnishings; of photography and posing; and of masks, makeup, Botox, and full-face implants. The list could go on. It is not that all such things need to have been included. But cultural and historical changes in the standing and roles of faces and facial encounters hover on the margins or in the background as unacknowledged but potential intruders into this largely untroubled treatment.

WESLEY A. KORT, *Duke University*.

LEVENSON, JON D. *The Love of God: Divine Gift, Human Gratitude, and Mutual Faithfulness in Judaism*. Library of Jewish Ideas. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016. xxii+235 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

The Library of Jewish Ideas was established by the Tikvah Foundation in collaboration with Princeton University Press in order to present Jewish understandings of key ideas—mortality, human nature, humor, and the law, among others—to a wide readership. *The Love of God* constitutes Jon D. Levenson's second volume for this series; his *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (2012) was its inaugural monograph. Unlike *Inheriting Abraham*, this new volume does not have an explicitly comparative orientation, but by its very nature the series, which seeks to explain Jewish texts and ideas to a general audience, encourages a certain amount of comparative analysis. Such a general tendency becomes all the more irresistible when much of the book revolves around the shared and contested canon of biblical texts. Jews and Christians hold the books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in common, but how they understand them can vary greatly within the individual traditions, let alone across confessional lines. The focus of this volume, love, ranks alongside the closely aligned concept of law as an example of how shared languages and texts can obscure significant differences of understanding. For all his insightful attention to common Christian construals of biblical texts and (mis-)construals of Jewish traditions, however, Levenson here focuses on how Jewish readers through the millennia have understood the idea of love between God and Israel.

Levenson begins *The Love of God* by analyzing one of the most famous biblical quotations on the subject: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:4–5) (1). Levenson uses this passage to articulate a philosophical question that governs much of the rest of the book: how can love—what modern readers understand as an internal, individual emotion—be commanded? Levenson answers this question with subtlety and nuance, exploring what "love" connoted in an array of ancient, medieval, and modern sources. He considers how love has been understood; where in the body it was experienced; what obligations it incurred on lover and beloved; and he nuances the issue of tensions (real or perceived) between emotions and actions. The concept of chosenness merits particular scrutiny, as do the relationships between love and covenant, love and fear, and love and eros. The analysis, particularly in the early chapters, is informed by an array of theoretical insights, including affective and performance theory.

Three of the book's five chapters focus on biblical material and pay particular attention to Genesis (the Abraham story and covenant) and Deuteronomy from the Torah; Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel from the Prophets; and the Song of Songs from the Writings. He attends carefully to key words—not only "love" but "covenant," "heart," "soul," and the untranslatable *hesed* ("lovingkindness" in the King James's distinctive coinage)—and provides a rich web of biblical intertexts to highlight the range of meanings passages may have had within the biblical canon. In essence, Levenson attempts to articulate how crucial scriptural passages on the subject of divine love might have been heard and understood by their "original" audiences. Along the way, he provides a variety of effective analogies that illustrate closely aligned ideas of loyalty, obligation, and reciprocity, many of them rooted in the biblical texts themselves: king-vassal, master-slave, parent-child, and husband-wife primary among others.

Throughout these initial chapters, Levenson incorporates significant material from postbiblical Jewish sources. Most of these sources will be familiar to readers with some background in Second Temple Judaism and Rabbinics (e.g., the martyr

narratives of 2 Maccabees and of Rabbi Akiva). Levenson makes excellent use of these texts to highlight the dynamic nature of biblical interpretation as both responsive and creative. Levenson does not offer significant contextualization of these sources; instead, he sketches a rough but useful picture of the meanings key biblical texts had in the minds of postbiblical Jewish readers and suggests how those understandings of love, covenant, and obligation in turn shaped texts written by Jews in this formative period.

Levenson does not limit his survey to biblical and ancient sources, however. Chapter 4 focuses on medieval Jewish philosophers (including Bahya and Maimonides), while chapter 5 concentrates on the twentieth century (Buber and Rosenzweig). These two chapters, while engagingly written, reflect the inherent challenges of the book's broad scope. With each epoch treated, the diversity and sheer quantity of sources increases. Particularly in the final chapter, as lucid and compelling as Levenson's analysis is, Buber and Rosenzweig cannot encompass the complexity that the concept of "divine love" entails and engenders in the modern Jewish world. Given that this book is written for a contemporary audience of nonspecialists—Levenson generally assumes an audience primarily familiar with Protestant traditions—the necessary brevity of the final chapter is particularly regrettable. In a more capacious study, issues of (or even simple gestures toward) gender, sexuality, and particularly feminist contributions to the conversation (present in the earlier chapters!) would be valuable. "Judaism" in a work as broad as this book is reduced, understandably and perhaps unavoidably, to its most conventional outlines. Levenson draws on a wide and engaging array of biblical voices and sources in his discussion of love, but as he approaches the present tense, the room becomes too crowded for a representative symphony of perspectives.

Lest this final observation seem too negative, it is worth stressing how elegantly Levenson meets the goal of the series overall. The first three chapters, in particular, offer an experience akin to attending a seminar with a master teacher and could effortlessly enrich the syllabi of various courses. Indeed, the author's occasional asides explicitly ground much of the material in his pedagogical experience. The writing is lucid and the argument compelling and consistently maintained throughout the volume. Even the sidebars, presenting various postbiblical sources (Mishnaic texts, midrashic passages, medieval Hebrew poetry), which are otherwise not integrated into the chapters at all, become less perplexing if one imagines them as sources enriching a class discussion based on the chapter at hand. It does not offer scholars in biblical or Judaic studies much that is new, but it certainly merits a place in the Library of Jewish Ideas.

LAURA S. LIEBER, *Duke University*.

LORBERBAUM, YAIR. *In God's Image: Myth, Theology, and Law in Classical Judaism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 339 pp. \$102.00 (cloth).

Over the past few decades, the academic study of rabbinic Judaism has been dominated by scholars interested in history, literary theory, culture, law, and hermeneutics. The study of rabbinic theology has been largely neglected. Thus, the recent publication of Yair Lorberbaum's Hebrew *Tzelem Elohim* (2004), in English under the title *In God's Image: Myth, Theology, and Law in Classical Judaism*, is cause for celebration for those wishing to know more about ancient Jewish thought. Drawing on recent revisionist scholarship of the late 1980s and 1990s, which exposed the problematic scholarly tendency to read Talmudic texts through a medieval rationalist Maimonidean lens, Lorberbaum examines anew the rabbinic (and biblical) notion that human beings

are created in the image of God (Hebrew “*Tzelem Elohim*”). As opposed to earlier scholars who read *Tzelem Elohim* as a metaphor, ethical mandate, or as pertaining to the spiritual or intellectual dimension of the human being, Lorberbaum convincingly shows that the rabbis regarded the totality of the human being—including the body—to be an actual image or icon of God. For the rabbis, argues Lorberbaum, human beings share the same structural form as the divine and serve as His representatives on earth.

If Lorberbaum ended his argument here, his thesis would not be innovative or controversial, at least in academic circles. But Lorberbaum goes further and makes the striking claim that according to Hillel (first century CE) and later Rabbi Akiva (second century CE), human beings do not merely resemble or represent God, but they are “veritable ‘extension[s]’ of the Deity” (2). That is, God dwells in humanity. Lorberbaum calls this religious worldview—which was popular in late antiquity—“image as presence” (6). Lorberbaum’s revolutionary thesis thus inverts the typical trend among scholars of rabbinic theology who accentuate how the rabbis humanize God (i.e., God dances, studies Torah, prays, etc.). By contrast, Lorberbaum highlights how one school of rabbis divinized humanity. Put simply, Lorberbaum is less interested in the anthropomorphic God aspect of *Tzelem Elohim* but in the theomorphic human aspect.

Lorberbaum connects his reading of *Tzelem* as “extensions” or “presence” of God with what he regards as a central feature of rabbinic thought: theurgy. In academic Jewish studies, the term “theurgy” denotes those human actions that automatically affect God, whether positively or negatively. While Gershom Scholem traced the beginnings of Jewish theurgy to medieval Kabbalah, Moshe Idel pushes it back to the rabbinic period, as a number of midrashic passages suggest that Jewish rituals augment or decrease divine power. Building on Idel, Lorberbaum argues that the conceptual basis for rabbinic theurgy is Hillel and Akiva’s doctrine of *Tzelem Elohim*. As humans are quasi divine, the experience and fate of humans, perforce, affects God. According to Lorberbaum, the rabbinic God is thus augmented or expanded not only by the performance of ritual (as Idel emphasizes) but even through an increase in the world’s population. In other words, additional humans in the universe translates into greater divinity. Conversely, the death or suffering of any human beings, even wicked ones, would diminish or harm God.

The central proof texts of Lorberbaum’s study are those *aggadic* statements that link the obligation to procreate and the prohibition against murder to the increase or decrease of the divine image (recall that, for Lorberbaum, divine “image” implies divine presence). While these texts explicitly invoke *Tzelem Elohim*, Lorberbaum proposes that other legal and nonlegal texts are similarly based on *Tzelem Elohim*, even when the doctrine is not explicitly invoked. Most prominent, Lorberbaum contends that the idea of *Tzelem Elohim* accounts for various rabbinic innovations to judicial criminal procedure. These include the rabbinic desire to prevent disfiguration of the body when courts impose the death penalty; rabbinic opposition to hanging the accused; rabbinic substitution of lashes for excision (*karet*); and, finally, the rabbinic law that an “eye for an eye” should be understood as monetary compensation. Throughout these investigations, Lorberbaum emphasizes that, in the rabbinic imagination, there is no sharp demarcation between legal (*halakhic*) and non-legal (*aggadic*) texts: the rabbinic theosophy of *Imago Dei* fuels rabbinic law.

Lorberbaum attributes this radical theological innovation to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. As divinity could no longer be encountered in the Temple, Jews were forced to locate a new dwelling place for the divine: this time within the human being. In the rabbinic period, according to this theory, divine immanence shifted from place (Temple) to people. This explains, argues Lorberbaum, why the doctrine of *Tzelem Elohim* only played a marginal role in Second Temple literature but a dominant one soon after.

In God's Image should be placed at the top of any syllabus in rabbinic literature or Jewish theology. It reconfirms the radical discontinuities between rabbinic and later philosophical thought but also, most important, exposes the emerging radical humanism of the rabbis. This latter point has not been adequately addressed. Thus, scholars should place Lorberbaum's thesis alongside the classical theory, presented most cogently by Moshe Halbertal (*People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997]), that the rabbis, in response to the Destruction, relocated God's presence to the texts of Torah. Contra Halbertal, Lorberbaum has the rabbis, or at least some of them, resituating God's presence to the human being. Indeed, in subsequent Jewish thought, texts and people become the two central locations in which Jews encounter God.

Lorberbaum's work should generate much discussion in the fields of biblical interpretation, Jewish theology, and rabbinic literature, even as some of his formulations might encounter some resistance. It is not at all clear that the Akivan school understood the "image of God" as actual "presence of God." It is equally possible that, for Hillel or the Akivan school, people merely represent or symbolize God; they do not share an ontological identity with God. Moreover, Lorberbaum assumes that rabbinic passages that describe God as suffering in response to human pain are "therurgic" ones. Here, too, some of Lorberbaum's proof texts are vague. Does God experience pain automatically, almost mechanically, when the human being suffers as Lorberbaum suggests (as humans are "extensions" of God), or does God experience pain because of His emotional state—that is, God empathizes with human suffering or is worried about His reputation (as humans resemble God). With these types of interpretations, Lorberbaum sometimes appears to retroject later Kabbalistic conceptions and presuppositions about the relationship between humanity and divinity back onto rabbinic texts.

Notwithstanding these remaining questions, the work should become a classic in the study of Jewish thought: it is well written, informative, accessible, and includes all the relevant scholarship (both Hebrew and English) on rabbinic theology. It cleverly traces two schools of rabbinic thought on *Tzelem Elohim*, offers innovative readings on rabbinic laws surrounding death penalty procedure, and provides wonderful summaries of two central areas of rabbinic studies: the relationship between *halakha* and *aggadah* and the problematic tendency of earlier scholarship to impose medieval philosophical readings back onto rabbinic texts.

DOV WEISS, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*.

McVICAR, MICHAEL J. *Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 326 pp. \$34.95 (paper); \$27.99 (ebook).

Rousas John Rushdoony is perhaps the most influential twentieth-century American theologian few people have heard of. His philosophy of Christian Reconstruction has been similarly influential—and similarly absent from most popular discourses regarding American religious thought. Michael J. McVicar's carefully written *Christian Reconstruction: R. J. Rushdoony and American Religious Conservatism* travels a long way toward recovering Rushdoony's legacy and rectifying this problem.

Rushdoony's son, the Rev. Mark Rousas Rushdoony, granted McVicar access to his father's personal papers and unpublished manuscripts. Rushdoony's Chalcedon Foundation offered support, connections, and even publication of and feedback regarding some of McVicar's early research findings (xi). These connections could have

compromised *Christian Reconstruction*, but to the immense credit of both McVicar and the Chalcedon Foundation, this volume is a remarkably evenhanded and thorough account of a man who has been far more important to contemporary Christianity than his limited name recognition would indicate.

Rushdoony's *Christian Reconstruction* was, as McVicar concisely states, "a theological project situated at the juncture of religious practice, educational reform, and political action" (4). Rushdoony was the son of immigrants; his parents barely escaped the Armenian genocide of World War I. Despite a long family legacy of service in the Orthodox priesthood, Rushdoony's father converted to Presbyterianism under the influence of an American Presbyterian missionary and became a pastor. Born in New York and raised in California, the younger Rushdoony "recoiled in horror from what he saw as a degenerate and dangerous anti-Christian humanism lurking in the texts he encountered" as an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley (23). He followed his father into the Presbyterian priesthood.

While serving as a missionary on Nevada's Duck Valley Indian Reservation, Rushdoony became deeply interested in theologian Cornelius Van Til's method of presuppositional apologetics. Van Til asserted that the Christian God was the source of all knowledge. "To try to think independently of God is not only impossible," writes McVicar, "it also is the ultimate temptation that leads to sin in its very essence" (35). Van Til's theology resonated for the young minister, who worried that the myriad problems he witnessed on the reservation were the result of government dependence.

McVicar's access to Rushdoony's personal papers allows us a detailed window into the evolution of the budding theologian's thought. Rushdoony left the reservation in 1952 and embarked upon a journey that brought him out of the mainline Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), into the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and eventually out of parish ministry altogether in favor of spreading his increasingly comprehensive societal vision via the nonprofit Chalcedon Foundation, founded in 1965. Along the way he tangled with evangelical enterprises including the William Volker Fund and *Christianity Today*.

Rushdoony's most significant contribution to American religious thought came with the publication of *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (1973). The central argument of *The Institutes* was that Old Testament law "is still binding for modern Christians" (129). Old Testament law places parameters upon humans's ability to interpret—and therefore act in—the world. As Rushdoony put it, "the law defines . . . those who constitute the legitimate and the illegitimate members of society. The fact of law introduces a fundamental and basic inequality in society" (129).

From this thesis, Rushdoony proceeded to argue that humanism uses the institutions of society—the church, the state, and schools—to wage "religious war," substituting "man's lawless self-assertion of autonomy" for "God's absolute justice" (131). He proposed an alternative vision of society, which he defined as Christian Reconstruction, or "theonomy." Rushdoony invested special significance in Gen. 1:26–28. For Rushdoony, these words constituted a "'creation mandate' or 'dominion mandate' requiring humans to 'subdue all things and all nations to Christ and His law-word'" (131). By following God's Old Testament law, Christian "dominion men," gender intentional, could "reconstruct" the world in God's image.

Reconstruction would be carried out through the organizational locus of the family, and Christian Reconstruction became especially significant in connection with developing challenges to state-mandated education. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, Rushdoony and his supporters entered the legal realm to challenge compulsory schooling laws and prohibitions against home schooling. Rushdoony was, for a time, a frequent guest on Pat Robertson's *The 700 Club* and D. James Kennedy's

television program, and Reconstruction literature proliferated via the fertile pens of Rushdoony and his disciples.

"Dominion" theology traveled widely across the conservative evangelical spectrum, even as leading evangelicals hesitated to identify specifically with the combative Rushdoony or his Chalcedon Foundation. McVicar clearly delineates this complicated web of connections. By the late 1980s, however, Rushdoony's idea of "dominion" began to elicit a sustained campaign of opposition. For premillennialists, Rushdoony's postmillennial vision "confuse[d] human political ambitions with godly sovereignty" (205). Premillennialist evangelical opposition, plus the weight of increasing divisions among Rushdoony, son-in-law Gary North, and other former acolytes, caused Christian Reconstruction to founder by the late 1980s and early 1990s.

McVicar demonstrates well, however, how Rushdoony's ideas continue to permeate the evangelical landscape. Among Christian Reconstruction's contributions have been "an aggressive, patriarchal antistatism to conservative evangelical understandings of education," a "specific strain of Christian libertarianism" that has interacted constructively with forces such as the Tea Party, and "a major but underappreciated role in forming popular ideas of what makes religion *good* and *bad* in the United States" (222). In other words, evangelicals were able to use Reconstructionism as a "bad" to cast their own activities as "good" (230). The irony, of course, is that the evangelicals who reject Rushdoony's postmillennialism often adopt his movement's educational or economic philosophies—often absent awareness of their origins.

Rushdoony's theology is complicated. He developed new terms and constructed complex interpretive frameworks around them. McVicar succeeds, however, in defining and interpreting Christian Reconstruction and its history without sacrificing accessibility. Scholars of religion will find his discussion sufficiently sophisticated, but historians, political scientists, and others seeking insight into this influential theologian and his influence will benefit from McVicar's clarity of exposition. *Christian Reconstruction* fills an important gap in the literature; it deserves a wide readership.

LAURA JANE GIFFORD, *Portland, Oregon*.

NI, ZHANGE. *The Pagan Writes Back: When World Religion Meets World Literature*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015. 248 pp. \$59.50 (cloth); \$27.50 (paper).

In this innovative book, Zhange Ni makes an ambitious attempt to define, inhabit, and exemplify a new role for scholars tracking the interfaces of religion and literature: the role of the "pagan magician-critic" (69–72). What Ni calls "paganism" is a slippery "countercategory," something that is, in her arresting phrase, "repudiated into being" by monotheism (4). That is, paganism is not a single unified self-defining system but is whatever is repudiated and demonized by monotheism, where "monotheism" is defined not only as the explicit embrace of belief in a single revealed creator God but in any cultural practice that recapitulates monotheism's defining gesture: the establishment of "a regulative idea that establishes what is true worship by repudiating spiritual and civilizational falsehood" (3). Paganism is the repudiated multiplicity, the nonacknowledgment rather than the explicit denial of a single transcendent source of creativity and authority in the world. As such, Ni's project is not to restore some historical pagan tradition but rather to "dismantle the monotheist mechanism of establishing truth over falsehood, or identity at the expense of the other, by unleashing the critical potential of the repudiated pagan" (4). This is to be done through reconceptualizing the relation between the world, the text, and

the critic in terms of pagan ideas of divine immanence, idolatry, and magic, in place of monotheist inheritances like divine transcendence, icon, and judge. As Ni defines this shift, “in contradistinction to the icon-text, which elevates our gaze toward monotheist transcendence once and for all, the idol-text is created in a process involving multiple participants, since it engages a text made by the craftsperson/author, animated by the critic/priest(ess), and contested by idol-worshippers and iconoclasts. This process proceeds from a collective generative force that is singular and plural, divine and human, and ultimately identical with the pagan world of radical immanence and irreducible multiplicity” (3–4).

This is an intriguing program for praxis. One of the most direct results of the shift in orientation it incites is that the expanded definition of monotheism, as a cultural format that extends beyond its explicit historical form, recasts the dominant trends of the modern study of religion as still falling, usually unwittingly, squarely within the scope of “monotheism.” It perhaps requires Ni’s expanded world literature perspective, with one foot in East Asia, to make so clear something that many have perhaps obscurely felt but have not had a vantage point from which to formulate; that is, the massive collusion and general structural similarity between monotheism and the allegedly antimonotheistic and secular European cultural systems that have arisen in its wake or even in opposition to it. In a very real sense, from the point of view sketched here by Ni, monotheism and modern European cultural theory are all the same story over and over again. It is the story of bivalence: true versus false, liberating versus oppressive, real versus illusory. The binary oppositions of one against many, of transcendent against immanent, of true against false, of representation versus reality, are here regarded as a by-product of the founding gesture of monotheism. Crucially, the religious-secular binary, assumed in the critique or scientific study of religion, is itself an avatar of monotheism; pagan criticism thus suggests a way out of the bifurcation between secular treatments of literature as an instrument of iconoclasm against a given society’s unquestioned sacred cows and theological treatments for which literature serves as a vehicle for transmitting sanctioned truths of the society’s (one true) religion. From this point of view, secular criticism, like the theological apologetics it ostensibly opposes, unwittingly reinforces the central motif of the colonial framework, the naturalized monotheism that informs critical secularity, thereby undermining its own purpose. In a certain way, as Ni acknowledges, this move echoes the recent work of Jean-Luc Nancy, who makes bold to interpret European atheism as itself a distinctive achievement of the West made possible by, and extending the basic impulse of, Christian monotheism. But Ni critiques and moves beyond Nancy in reversing the scales of valuation. Far from wanting to extend the dedivinization and single-standard instrumentalization of the world that both secularity and monotheism encourage, she engages the “idol-texts” as a “critic-magician.” This means not seeking in them any truths of the crypto-monotheist sort, either as intended meanings or as deep objective verities somehow channeled into them through the prophetic genius of their authors. Rather, Ni offers an endeavor to participate in the process of the manipulation of illusions as a priestess animates and sanctifies the handiwork of an idol maker with her spells, thereby concretizing and conjuring there one of the limitless expressions of the divine creative power that is, on the antimonotheist pagan view developed here, immanent in all of the participants as in each and all points of nature.

Ni performs this ritual program on four different authors, chosen for the range of their varying self-positionings with respect to religion and secularity and with respect to monotheist colonization and constructions of pagan resistance: Cynthia Ozick’s *The Puttermesses Papers* (New York: Knopf, 1997); Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (New York: Knopf, 2006), *Oryx and Crake* (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2003), *The Year of the Flood* (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2009), and *Maddad*-

dam (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2013); Endō Shūsaku's *Deep River* (trans. Van C. Gessel [New York: New Directions, 1994]); and Gao Xingjian's *Soul Mountain* (trans. Mabel Lee [New York: HarperCollins, 2000]). In Ozick's work she finds unacknowledged pagan countercurrents enlisted in the construction of antipagan Judaism as ironically resistant to normative Christian monotheism; in Atwood's four works, an unexpectedly shared dystopian vision reflecting a gradually evolving pagan rebellion against one and the same "monotheist nightmare"; in Endō an embrace of non-Japanese pagan Asia running askew of the author's avowed postimperialistic Christianity; in Gao's attempt to excavate an authentic pagan China repudiated by Confucian and Communist officialdom, an inadvertent importation of the very categorical scheme he seeks to transcend. The readings are artful and often eye-opening, though sometimes the payoff does not quite deliver on the promise of the premise. Ni of course has a built-in rationale for the inconclusiveness of her interpretations, which mirrors precisely the multiplicity and ambivalence she claims for her world of pagan immanence. It would be uncharitable and tone-deaf to call this nothing more than a cop-out; if we take seriously the power of Ni's founding intervention and its attempted reorientation of the critical endeavor, as I do, we have to rise to the challenge of reconsidering what we expect from the experience of reading, and it is undeniable that she succeeds in opening up to us these undiscovered terrains in the texts she presents. If these readings nevertheless leave many questions unanswered, as each graven idol presents the immanent divinity without exhausting it, this is perhaps an ideal invitation to future pagan magician-critics to take up the task. Scholars of religion and literature straining against the still undiminished hegemony of obscurely felt shape-shifting monotheistic premises, which maddeningly seem to know how to regenerate themselves with new mutations after each new vaccine, will surely welcome Ni's pointing of a way toward further such idolatries in the future. BROOK ZIPORYN, *University of Chicago*.

O'BRIEN, CONOR. *Bede's Temple: An Image and Its Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 280 pp. \$110.00 (cloth).

Conor O'Brien's *Bede's Temple: An Image and Its Interpretation* is an attempt to highlight the entirety of Bede's theology and worldview through an examination of the Tabernacle and the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. O'Brien demonstrates that the Temple played a major role in Bede's extensive and influential writings and philosophy. One of the central theses is that Bede's writing on the Temple metaphor was heavily influenced by the ideas and verbal imagery that lay behind the early eighth-century Codex Amiatinus that was produced at Bede's monastery in Wearmouth-Jarrow but was taken by Abbott Ceolfrith on a pilgrimage to Rome in 716, perhaps as a gift for the pope.

O'Brien claims that Bede's interpretation of the Temple image was basically established in the New Testament. Although the New Testament has various interpretations of the Temple, Bede preferred some to others and in particular the Temple as the Church, as Christ's body, and as the progression of the individual toward the life of heaven. Bede also built on other Christian writers. From the second century Christian theologian Origen interpreted the image of the tabernacle as representing the Church that was built by the teachers of the faith. This was a central theme of Bede's exegesis. Ambrose Bishop of Milan likened the Temple image as a church being built from living stones, an image that shifted toward emphasizing the role of Gentiles in the Temple's construction and a view that was also a consideration of Bede's. He inherited

a tradition that moved away from the image of the Temple as the individual Christian soul to a more spiritual collective direction. However, Bede made particular use of architectural metaphors to enhance the spiritual aspects of the Church. For Bede the image of the Temple expressed a vision of universal history where the Old and the New Testament were inextricably linked with a common vision.

Bede examined the historical details of the Temple because they were the foundations of his spiritual understanding. The measurements and architectural features of the Temple were important to Bede not because of their aesthetic interest but because they were the intermingling of a historic and spiritual interpretation. The Tabernacle came before the Temple and, while the Tabernacle was built by the Jews under portable tents, the Temple was built by the Jews and the Gentiles together as a more stationary and permanent structure. He perceived that the stages of true religion were compatible with the stages of the Temple image: the preincarnation of the synagogue, the Temple, the postincarnation church of the Jews and that of the Gentiles, thus representing the entire history of the elect; however, Bede asserted that it was universal and relevant to his time.

For Bede the history of the earth and the cosmos was interlinked. O'Brien points out that Bede builds on the metaphors of Origen, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Cassiodorus, and other early Christians. Bede's work on the Tabernacle and the Temple promoted the ideas that the Tabernacle on the Temple were allegorical of the present and future church respectively. For Bede the Temple was a spatial extension of the Church that stretched out throughout the universe including the far ends of its fringes, that is, the Anglo-Saxon world that he lived in. Bede argued that Christ became the Temple of God by assuming human nature and that Christ's body became the Temple both as a synthesis of the physical as well as his spiritual body. In this vein the Temple Church was the bridge between the earthly and spiritual, between eternity and the Christian soul, and Bede was concerned with the institution that had to struggle with corruption in this less-than-perfect world. The Temple was built by a Christian elite, those who held the highest Christian standards and reflected on the best apostolic model in this less-than-perfect world. Every living stone of the God's Temple would be represented by the elite soul that would shape the correct Christian standard for the Church. The individual as the Temple only gained meaning because God himself, by assuming that human nature, had become the Temple.

O'Brien builds an argument that Bede's Temple metaphor was heavily influenced by the ideas and verbal imagery that lay behind the Codex Amiatinus that was housed at his monastery. He highlights the importance of the influence of the communal culture at Bede's monastery; he notes that the presence of the Codex would have stimulated much discussion and that much of the Temple imagery in the Codex was integrated into Bede's writings on the Temple. Bede's life is not that of an individual; rather, he followed the Benedictine ideal of a communal life, and the imagery in the Codex Amiatinus would have been part of those discussions. The argument is persuasive and is more satisfactory than the idea of an individual genius writing in isolation that many scholars promulgate.

Bede's Temple: An Image and Its Interpretation is a fascinating examination of the different aspects of the Temple and the metaphorical image that Bede used. The book is well constructed and argued. However there are elements that could be covered more satisfactorily. Bede used number symbolism to justify the interpretation of the Temple and its relationship to the spiritual community and the Church. Although this symbolism is merely alluded to, it is an interesting part of his evaluation of the Temple that deserves closer consideration. Also, the Temple's and the Tabernacle's architectural spatial context in relationship to this symbolism could have been highlighted. Although O'Brien's work is extremely thorough and comprehensive and clearly fills

a research gap, he does not give due recognition to Bede's Christian appropriation of Jewish tradition, particularly in the writings of Josephus and Philo. Although the early Christian writers were paramount to Bede's work, the appropriation of the Jewish tradition is an important aspect of his writing and should not be ignored. Nevertheless, the entire book is very compelling and goes a long way in assisting our understanding of Bede and his Temple imagery.

TESSA MORRISON, *University of Newcastle, Australia.*

OGDEN, SCHUBERT M. *To Preach the Truth: Sermons and Homilies.* Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015. 166 pp. \$21.00 (paper).

OGDEN, SCHUBERT M. *To Teach the Truth: Selected Courses and Seminars.* Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015. 224 pp. \$27.00 (paper).

With the help of distinguished friends Philip E. Devenish, Franklin I. Gamwell, and Andrew D. Scrimgeour, named in the preface of both volumes as collaborators in the task, Schubert M. Ogden has gathered a collection of his own sermons and church seminars offered over the course of a long career as a minister and educator—a career he describes as the essential “other side” (*Courses*, ix) of his work as an academic theologian. The earliest of the twenty-six sermons dates to the beginning of 1955, and the last to 2003 (with only three later than 1985); the seminars are undated, but the careful reader can detect a similar range of composition, from the 1960s to the first years of this century.

Examining the two volumes is somewhat akin to the experience of opening a long-buried time capsule, even though in this instance the materials were selected recently. In the case of the sermons, the date alone is given (though Ogden notes in the preface that he preached regularly in local congregations and also in college or university chapels). In the case of the courses and seminars, two Protestant congregations in Texas are recognized as the context in which the material was developed. But the opportunity to contextualize the material further was missed, and the reader is left asking, “What does ‘today’ mean in ‘being a Christian today’?” And why this sermon rather than another—that is to say, why the absence of any sermon preached between April 1960 and May 1964, momentous years in the United States by any standard, though Ogden does address the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in a sermon preached on the first anniversary of that event; why the choice of short period pieces on marriage dating from 1973 and 1984; and why the inclusion of particular eulogies, in each case for an unnamed “dear brother” (*Sermons*, 73, 125) from 1976 and 1985? And perhaps more important, where was the editor? Did it not occur to anyone in the editorial office at Wipf and Stock to invite at least an introduction to the method of selection of both sermons and seminar material or to provide some further historical or social context? In the case of the sermon preached on November 22, 1964, Ogden references that he is speaking from a pulpit in Dallas. But did Ogden never speak to any other events of the day? It would greatly surprise me to find that he did not, but one would not know it from the collection of sermons chosen, bar two sentences on “the dreaded prospect of thermonuclear annihilation” (*Sermons*, 11) and an allusion to methods of jury selection in Texas (67). And two references to feminist scholarship are the only explicit nods (in the sermons) to the great diversifying of theological endeavor in the decades in question, again surprising from one who made his academic mark as an eminent post-Bultmann scholar, a process theologian, and interpreter—and sometime critic—of liberation theology.

The question of editorial oversight becomes more urgent with regard to the volume of courses and seminars. It is only in the preface (which the reviewer may not skip, but many readers might) that it is made explicit that these courses and seminars were taught not in a school or college but in congregational contexts. And this begs the question as to the intended readership: is Ogden choosing to publish for the edification of individual members of other congregations interested in pursuing scholarship on the making of scripture or creed? Or does he have in mind ministers wishing to incorporate informed theological perspectives in their own introductions to the Christian faith? In either case, some background to the context in which the lectures (and despite the title they are presented as lectures, not as seminars or courses with suggestions for discussion or further study) are offered would be useful. The lecture on the authority of scripture introduces the reader to critical theological thinking, including basic principles of historical-critical study and hermeneutics, but offers nothing newer than material learned by this reviewer as a theology student at Oxford in the 1970s: the only footnote is to a book of prayers for pastors, dated 1960, and John Wesley, Willi Marxsen, Luther, and Kierkegaard are the only post-apostolic sources named in the text. There is nothing to situate Ogden himself—beyond what one can infer from the preface—nor his original audience. The man or woman in the pew might be forgiven for thinking this to be the state of scholarship in 2015, the date of publication, but would they not then wonder why this particular discussion is devoid of reference to public argument about the nature and use of scripture over the past four or five decades?

The question of context is addressed most clearly in the section entitled “Being a Christian Today.” In the first paragraph, Ogden notes that he will give “particular attention . . . to being a Christian in the USA today” (*Courses*, 81). After a typically erudite (though again not referenced) introductory discussion of christology and of living the Christian faith, he lists divisions and controversies among Christians in relation to such things as “the emergence of plurality” (*Courses*, 98) and the challenge of inequalities as his focus. Citing James K. Galbraith (an essay of 2002), Ogden finally brings the reader explicitly into the early twenty-first century and offers a concise account of some of the great questions that have characterized his own theological scholarship down through the decades. For further discussion of one of these, he refers the reader to his 1992 volume *Is There Only One True Religion or Are There Many?* Now at last it becomes clear that what he or his editor may be seeking to do in publishing these lectures retrospectively is to offer a short popular introduction to elements of his scholarship encompassed in *On Theology* or *Doing Theology Today*. But why did neither he, nor his editor, say so if this were the case?

And this is where I find myself fancifully wishing that his collaborators, in bringing these two volumes to press, might have included in addition some of his other chosen interlocutors, for a broader approach: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza or the late John Hick, for example. But the one who unearths a time capsule is always left with some sense of puzzlement as to the mode by which its content was selected, and in the end the unanswered questions make the encounter, perhaps generations later, all the more intriguing. The ministers or congregants who come across these selections will perhaps find their curiosity leading them to the “other side” of Ogden’s work, his substantial and energetic output more fully realized elsewhere—an outcome to be commended.

ELIZABETH DAVENPORT, *University of Chicago*.

SCHAPOSCHNIK, ANA E. *The Lima Inquisition: The Plight of the Crypto-Jews in Seventeenth-Century Peru*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015. xi+294 pp. \$65.00 (cloth).

In the chaotically charming *centro de Lima*, on the always crowded Avenida Abancay, stands the Museo del Congreso y de la Inquisición. When one enters the *museo*, some features promptly stand out: the place is intentionally dark, many of the torture devices are exposed, and the experience of a sort of near-and-remote fear emerges in the spectator. In many ways, all the stereotypes of the Inquisition find confirmation here. In this very place, the Lima Tribunal of the Inquisition operated from 1584 to 1820 (131). Here is where most of Ana E. Schaposchnik's *The Lima Inquisition* takes place, perhaps in an attempt to become an alternative *museo* truly capable of telling us the rich and complex story of the tribunal.

Relying on careful archival work done by herself and others, Schaposchnik reinforces the fact (well known among scholars but not so present in our cultural imagination) that the Inquisition, both in the Iberian Peninsula and in the colonies, did not execute a great number of people. On average, it only released to the secular arm about 2 percent of the people who went through a trial (11–12). In the same vein, the author shows clearly that the Inquisition had very regulated procedures. Thus, despite the always present scourge of corruption and other irregularities (140, for example), it cannot be claimed that the Inquisition was a capricious body. Obviously, our notion of due process differs greatly from the one of these tribunals, but Schaposchnik does a very good job showing that a basic sense of fairness was always maintained. Finally, she also provides important information to make the case for the overall goal of these trials. Instead of feeding the myth of a brutal and merciless tribunal, Schaposchnik emphasizes that the main aim of the inquisitors was to encourage repentance “through social control and soft punishment” (15). Accordingly, the author shows how the person under examination was given almost endless opportunities to confess. In some cases, people were able to confess and repent even the night before the *auto de fe* where they were supposed to be burned at the stake (167).

But Schaposchnik's book is not only a carefully crafted archival investigation of what she calls the “quantitative dimension” of the Inquisition. She also pays attention to the qualitative dimension via a rhetorical analysis of the symbolic power of the Lima Inquisition. Most of this happens in the last chapter of the book, probably the most interesting one. Here she analyzes the January 23, 1639, *Auto General de Fe*, going beyond what happened in order to move to the symbolic dimension of this event. For Schaposchnik this *auto* was conceived as a “colossal display that made sure and visible the application of punishment” (152). Indeed, words such as “majestic,” “incomparable,” “dramatic,” and “theatrical” saturate the accounts of the autos. They were religious and secular festivals where a “pedagogy of fear” (10) took place through “exemplary punishment” (19). This overwhelming aura of sacred punishment elicited by the majestic and theatrical nature of the *autos de fe* became a teaching device through which the Inquisition controlled the population. Accordingly, the number of people killed was less crucial than the terrifying aura of the way in which they died (129–30). Here Schaposchnik perhaps goes even deeper than other scholars. In analyzing the rhetoric of the 1639 *auto*, the author shows us the true power of the Inquisition, namely, the monopolization of cultural representation. The *Complicidad grande* is the best example of this. In that period of time, 1635–39, the Lima Inquisition managed to represent the Jew as the enemy of society. Its success in doing so was so great that it tried hundreds of people with significant civil collaboration. As Schaposchnik points out, the tribunal did not even need to deploy hidden informants and spies because “anyone who had undergone Christian indoctrination and regularly

attended Mass could serve as the eyes of the Inquisition" (103). This was possible because the Lima Inquisition generated or deepened disgust toward the Jews, disgust patently manifested in the way people insulted and then burned wooden figures of the Jews in the Holy Week celebrations (170–71). In that sense, Schaposchnik finely argues that the *autos de fe* were a culmination of those expressions of disgust: they "made real the rites of scorn and destruction that were wrought on the wooden figures. . . . The literal execution, then, was conceptually entrenched in colonial society's religiosity through its expression and repetition each year during the Holy Week festival" (171).

Unfortunately, despite all the valuable information provided by *The Lima Inquisition*, the reader really misses a thicker conceptual framework and a better sense of the bigger picture. Even though chapters 1 and 2 attempt to give us some context with regard to the emergence of the Inquisition, the presentation is merely descriptive. Why was the Inquisition created to start with? The answers provided by the author are insufficient. There is very little discussion of issues as important as authority, certainty, power, and politics. What does the Inquisition tell us about the early modern era? Why was it so important to exercise such massive control over people's lives? For instance, Schaposchnik refers to the notion of "immaterial panoptic" (25, 102) in Michael Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* but never elaborates the idea, leaving the reader with a very unclear sense of the author's take regarding issues as critical as the role of power. Moreover, she disagrees with Foucault regarding the interpretation of punishment as an end but again does not elaborate (61).

Other issues remain barely discussed as well. Why was religious uniformity so crucial? Was it just for geopolitical reasons? How can we explain this sort of religious paranoia? Schaposchnik is correct when she examines the problem of the systems of representation created by the Inquisition, but she does not delve deeply enough into the more fundamental questions. Furthermore, the problem of the "figural other" is only superficially addressed. She mentions in passing that the *indios* were not targeted by the Inquisition, but later on by the *extirpación de idolatrías*. I believe this is a key issue, because the representation of the other as an object of fear is located in a specific kind of other (the Jew), not in all. Why was the Inquisition open to tolerate some degree of religious pluralism (syncretism) in the case of the indigenous population (77) but not in the case of the *conversos*? One could guess that the hatred toward the Jews is based on the role they arguably had in the death of Jesus, but this is already an interesting topic that deserved further exploration.

In sum, despite the many accomplishments of this book, a better sense of the cultural self-understanding of the time is needed. Schaposchnik appears to be aware of that need when she moves to the qualitative side of her argument, but swimming in the ocean of her descriptive account she appears to be overtaken by the quantitative. The book, however, points to several cardinal questions. Perhaps it is the task of others to try to answer them.

RAÚL ZEGARRA, *Chicago, Illinois.*

STROUMSA, GUY G. *The Making of the Abrahamic Religions in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 225 pp. \$110.00 (cloth).

Guy G. Stroumsa offers a different perspective on the religious developments of the eastern Mediterranean basin in Late Antiquity. In particular, he invites us to move beyond the notion that the most significant development of this time and place was the triumph of monotheism in the form of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. This view, he notes, is really a secular notion of the *praeparatio evangelica* the-

ology of Eusebius. Rather, by broadening the definition of Late Antiquity; by including other religions like Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and early Islam; and by opening ourselves to the complexities of so-called monotheism at this time, we position ourselves to see the religious landscape from the end of pagan sacrificial cults to the spread of Islam as an ongoing series of transformations into what we now call “Abrahamic traditions.” As Stroumsa says in his introduction, he wishes to replace *praeparatio evangelica* with something more like “*praeparatio coranica*” (7). In this reconceptualization, we can begin to see that Judaism and Christianity (and other religions of the time and place) constituted together a new form of late Roman religiosity that coalesced eventually into Islam, Rabbinic Judaism, and Catholic Christianity.

Stroumsa begins his considerations by noting the remarkable shift away from religion as a sacrificial system to religion as personal, faith-based, and scriptural. This is reminiscent of Karl Jasper’s “Axial Age,” Stroumsa acknowledges, but with a narrower focus. Essentially, sacrifices in late Roman times lost their credibility as public rituals and, with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, their credible locus for Judeans. Both formative Christianity and formative Judaism moved on to replace sacrifices with private piety and the book. This transformation can also be described as what Stroumsa labels “rationalization,” to borrow, with qualifications, Max Weber’s terminology. What he means by this is that religions began to create a discourse based on a revealed text and on the reasoned exposition of that text in lieu of what Harvey Whitehouse called the “imagistic”—that is, the more prophetic, charismatic, even magical—orientation of priestly sacrificial religions. To be sure “imagistic” and sacrificial religiosity did not entirely disappear but were clearly being moved, Stroumsa argues, to the margins.

At this point, Stroumsa turns to investigating the particular structures of thought that coalesced during these centuries. Part 2 of the book (chaps. 3–5) focuses on the notion of prophecy and its correlative messianism. Despite what might be called the “rationalization of religion” in Late Antiquity, the idea of “the chain of prophecy” continued to bear influence. Many religious leaders of Late Antiquity reflected this trend—Stroumsa mentions specifically Marcus Magus, Montanus, and Mani. The continuation of this tradition is important because in the seventh century the hermeneutical struggles between Christians and Jews, on the one hand, and the wars between the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, on the other, gave rise to the latest “seal of prophecy,” Muhammad and the religion that crystallized around him.

The thesis of this book pivots precisely on the hermeneutical struggles within and between Christianity and Judaism, struggles that provided the context for understanding not only the phenomenon of Muhammad but also for the spread of his followers into the heartland of Judaism and Christianity. Maybe the emblematic event of this expansion for all three religions was the conquest of Jerusalem in 638. For Jews this might represent the awaited displacement of the ruling Christians and so the possibility of the messianic return of the Temple; for Christians it could represent the rise of a heresy or even of the Antichrist; for Muslims it could be taken as the supersession of the true prophet over the false hermeneutics perpetrated by Christians and Jews. In any case, the victorious march of Islam forced both Jews and Christians to reach some determination as to their stance on prophecy, messianism, hermeneutics, and scripture. This juncture leads Stroumsa in chapter 5 into an examination of what the phrase “Seal of the Prophets” might mean in the various traditions and religious languages of the time.

Part 3 of the book (chaps. 6–7) now turns to concepts of religious law and community. Stroumsa starts by noting that for at least some time it was often hard to distinguish Jews from Christians in that they shared a common book, engaged in

shared debates over what were proper hermeneutical and philosophical deductions, and did so often in the same language. This commonality of the shared received religiosity can be seen to be reflected in some way in the Islamic common term for both, namely, “Ahl al-Kitab” (105). To be sure there were very significant and growing differences between the two communities, not least of which was Christian political dominance. Nonetheless, Stroumsa argues, contacts were deep and ongoing, evidence one can often find along the margins and expressed in terms of popular piety, magic, concepts of the holy man, and so forth (120). All this leads Stroumsa to posit that a kind of religious “koine” existed (120–21). When Islam emerged, it adopted many of these “family resemblances,” as Ludwig Wittgenstein called them (123). But the political differences were significant and came to a kind of telos in the Islamic concept of the “caliphate,” a term that is analyzed in chapter 7. The remaining chapters (8–10) look at the coming of Islam in light of these previously discussed *praeparationes* and develop and bring to a kind of synthesis the various themes adduced previously.

This book not only makes a strong case for its thesis but also serves at times as a sort of extended bibliographic essay of previous scholarship on the various topics under consideration. It is entirely likely that the book will set a new course for understanding the religious history of Late Roman Antiquity and its progeny.

PETER J. HAAS, *Case Western Reserve University*.

SWEENEY, DOUGLAS A. *Edwards the Exegete: Biblical Interpretation and Anglo-Protestant Culture on the Edge of the Enlightenment*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xii+391 pp. \$74.00 (cloth).

Douglas A. Sweeney, who teaches at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, has constructed an unusual but valuable volume focusing on the biblical thought of the eighteenth-century American theologian, Jonathan Edwards. Sweeney brings to the project an astonishing amount of professional experience and numerous previous publications bearing on Edwards’s interpretation of Scripture and his place as an exegete in the larger religious culture of his day. Those subjects have often been overshadowed by various other ways that Edwards the intellectual and theologian has been described and assessed in the historical literature. Sweeney builds his arguments directly on an analysis of Edwards’s diverse religious texts, including his exegetical manuscripts, which are now available in published form in the Yale Edition of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977–2009).

It would be hard to imagine someone better situated than Sweeney to take on the question of the relationship between Edwards’s lifelong investment in the study and interpretation of Scripture and its relationship to his diverse theological views articulated in his preaching and in his diverse publications. Sweeney’s career path has positioned him well to address such issues as Edwards’s views on the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, the christological center of both testaments of the Bible, and the eschatological view of history and of the future articulated in the Book of Revelation. Precisely for that reason this publication is likely to become a standard volume in the field of Edwards studies.

The biblical side of Edwards’s theology is a formative element that needs to be integrated into any description of his system of thought. This volume by Sweeney is powerful evidence of the same. He has made excellent use of the exegetical manuscripts compiled by Edwards over his lifetime, including most notably “Notes on Scripture,” “Miscellaneous Observations on the Holy Scriptures,” and “Notes on the Apocalypse,”

as well as other manuscripts focused on “Types,” “Images of Divine Things,” “Hebrew Idioms,” “Notes on the Books of Moses,” and other doctrinal aspects of the Bible. These manuscripts are evidence of the centrality of Edwards’s reflections on the biblical text in his personal life and in his ministry. One of the most powerful themes that Edwards articulated in his biblical writings was the harmony between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He declared that the Old Testament was filled with gospel truth, and he never moderated his love for Hebrew Scripture. For that reason he invested heavily in the task of writing a work that he planned to call “The Harmony of the Old and New Testament.” That text was to include sections focused on prophecies of the Messiah, on types of the gospel of Christ, and finally on the doctrinal harmony of the testaments. Again Sweeney has correctly sounded a major theme that informs Edwards’s biblical reflections. But Edwards was even more explicit about the centrality of Christ in the Bible. Sweeney points out that Edwards interpreted the history of the Old Testament christologically, declaring, for example, that David was a type of Christ, and Edwards also read the Psalms in such a manner.

Sweeney argues that in both public and private Edwards was “a God-intoxicated man” whose worldview was “Scripture-centered” (153). His focus included a special priority on the study of the Book of Revelation. Edwards’s lifelong investment in reflection on the Apocalypse fits with his optimism concerning the history of redemption. But because he regarded the Bible as the “most comprehensive book” in the world, it was his lifelong preoccupation (4); Scripture was to be such for all Christians. Sweeney has correctly asserted that the study of Scripture was central to Edwards his entire lifetime. The case for that judgment is made with clarity and with strong documentary support.

The unusual aspect of Sweeney’s volume relates to the relative size of the parts of this volume. The written text including the preface comprises 227 pages. The “Notes” and the index that follow together comprise 166 pages. Therefore approximately two-fifths of this volume is annotation, which is revealing regarding both the field of Edwards studies and also Sweeney’s purpose with regard to this volume. This very voluminous annotation may split readers because of the unusual challenge it represents. The “Notes” section of this volume may be a virtue for some readers but a source of frustration for others. Footnote 23 on pages 336–39, for example, is composed of 110 lines of bibliographical references. Of course, it is useful to have an abundant list of potential sources relating to the issue under discussion. That may be a virtue of huge bibliographical notes. Unfortunately, however, this voluminous footnoting pattern does not provide a reader with the clarity of focus desirable in substantive annotation. It is not likely that readers will pursue the scores of books and articles cited in one particular footnote. In fact, huge numbers of sources often discourage the average reader from following up on his or her interest. I think more focused annotation is useful for readers accompanied by a standard bibliography that can be organized in some appropriate thematic fashion.

Nevertheless, Sweeney’s publication underscores a very important aspect of the thought and life of the eighteenth-century American evangelical theologian. From this text it is clear that any general assessment of Edwards and of his work must take into account the central place and function of his lifelong effort as an exegete and interpreter of the text of the Bible. Any study of Edwards that does not deal with that religious and professional preoccupation is seriously flawed. Sweeney’s volume is therefore a valuable addition to the literature focused on Jonathan Edwards.

STEPHEN J. STEIN, *Indiana University*.

TOBI, YOSEF, and TOBI, TZIVIA. *Judeo-Arabic Literature in Tunisia, 1850–1950*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014. 367 pp. \$59.99 (cloth).

The English-language publication of *Judeo-Arabic Literature in Tunisia, 1850–1950* is a welcome step in renewing interest in the field of modern Judeo-Arabic literary studies and moreover in drawing that interest toward Tunisia's literary contributions in particular. Pruned of jargon and resisting wading into the philological or dialectic debates that often take up the focus of works on Judeo-Arabic language and literature, this work instead opens with a historical account of Tunisian Judeo-Arabic print culture. This discussion is foregrounded by a brief chronology of earlier Judeo-Arabic litterateurs, ranging from pre-Islamic peninsular poets to Saadia Gaon and Judah al-Harizi (2), and of topical secondary sources on Tunisian Judeo-Arabic print media. Yosef Tobi and Tzivya Tobi's introduction casts Tunisian Jewry as not only an inheritor of the aforesaid literary legacy but also its active perpetuator through the translation, transliteration, and republication of earlier works. Tobi and Tobi quickly narrow their focus, though, to original texts produced in Tunisia during the time period in question. In so doing, they highlight a number of historiographically valuable works.

This volume excels not only in contextualizing the efflorescence of Tunisian literature vis-à-vis European and Ottoman Hebrew-type presses but also in complicating the textual networks within this small nation. The cosmopolitan, politically charged literary output epitomized by Tunis presses is posited in a dialectic with more traditionalist, religiously motivated literary production, of which Djerba is a bastion. As much of the media that circulated in Judeo-Arabic at this time was in journals and serials (in which Sousse held a key share), one may see competing ideological discourses occurring in real time. Underpinning all of these works is the common feature of their "popularity" as a function of their linguistic register.

This vernacular accessibility also admits female readership and composition, which Tobi and Tobi reference throughout (17, 46, 109–17). The Tobis do not, though, carry this notion of popularity further than the texts themselves, unlike, for example, Eusèbe Vassel's precursory work on popular Tunisian Jewish literature (*La littérature populaire des Israélites tunisiennes* [Paris: E. Leroux, 1904]), which notes the role of orality in the Tunisian Jewish literary corpus. The Tobis' interest in Tunisian dramaturgical arts (202–23), though, may invite such explorations in the future, and their chapter on this topic is richly detailed. Such a study would be in good company; scholars such as Laura Chakravarty Box (*Strategies of Resistance in the Dramatic Texts of North African Women: A Body of Words* [New York: Routledge, 2005]) and Monia Hejaiej (*Behind Closed Doors: Women's Oral Narratives in Tunis* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996]) have set the stage for theorizing performativity in Tunisian literature, and particularly that of women.

The dialectic among Tunisia's Jewish communities and their presses is reflected in the anatomy of Tobi and Tobi's book. A chapter detailing satires about festival expenses directly follows one on lofty liturgical songs; a chapter on drama and theater, featuring a lengthy biography that dovetails with previously included *qinot* (laments) for the gone-too-soon starlet, Ḥabiba Messica (136–47), precedes one on prose narratives about religious figures, termed "righteous men" (223). Ḥabiba's narrative is woven throughout the volume in various ways, leading the reader to wonder whether she might eventually merit a monograph of her own, perhaps stitched together with the Tobis' previous work on Ḥabiba and the mythical character she has assumed in Tunisian literary consciousness ("Mythicization of a Popular Singer: Oral and Written Traditions about Ḥabiba Msika [Tunis, 1903–1930]," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* [1997]: 187–210).

Because the translated texts are divided into nine chapters according to genre rather than theme, one is able to readily detect thematic continuities across compositional structures. The commemorative rituals embodied in the *piyyutim* (liturgical poems), for example, become nexuses of financial and social anxiety in the satirical *malzumat* poetry, and likewise a religious celebration constitutes the backdrop in the novella, *Within the Walls of Tunis*, a chapter of which appears in translation. Works portraying epicenters of Jewish spiritual identity, from Tunisia's La Ghriba synagogue to the fraught, emergent state of Israel, expose Tunisian authors' critical engagement not only in Zionist discourses but also in a politics of local preservation. The selected texts are presented with sparing analysis and, as such, offer a condensed yet comprehensive anthology that captures a broad range of perspectives across class, gender, and political divides. The reader is left with much room for further "emendation, complementation, and expansion" (ix).

The translations of these works are simultaneously careful and beautiful. In popular poetry, familiar colloquialisms such as "a little cash" (*shwayyeh māl*) stand alongside such local foodstuffs as *qadīd* and *menguez*, with their original names kept intact (82–83). In this way, the translator captures both the natural idiom and the material particularity of Tunisian-Jewish daily life and its poetic representation. The essays on ideology and propaganda (174–202) are punctuated in translation in such a way as to showcase their rhetorical flourishes. Much of this is the work of the volume's English translator, David ben-Avraham.

At the same time, the translations point to the central issue with this volume. Whereas in the Hebrew original, transcriptions of the source texts are produced alongside their translations, no such measure is taken here. Moreover, there is no specific methodology section detailing where and how each of these sources was found, though a translation of Daniel Hagège's treatise on the presses' circulations and a brief literary review provide clues to this end in the final chapter. This may be a question of audience: as stated above, the work shies away from pedantry, and its tone evinces warmth, if not love, for the community at hand and its literature. As such, the volume's accessibility is not merely a priority but, seemingly, an ethical desideratum.

In compiling this work, the Tobis seem to have benefited much from a number of friends and contacts who offered access to private libraries belonging to Jews of Tunisian heritage. Surely such an experience—which the Tobis fondly acknowledge in their preface—cannot be readily replicated by another researcher. And yet, in pursuing this volume's stated goal of acting as a "harbinger of many to follow in the research and publication of Judeo-Arabic literature from Tunisia" (ix), greater methodological transparency and the inclusion of transcriptions of its original sources would be of great use. For the researcher, this work may be best considered as a companion to the Hebrew original.

This anthology is replete with texts drawn from several sectors of Tunisian Jewish society, spanning many genres and an ambitious though naturally delimited time span. The Tobis have elaborated the communicative lines across which these texts flowed, both internally in Tunisia and in tandem with the intellectual and material output of its neighbors, paying particular consideration to the Haskalah (the "Jewish Enlightenment"). The evident collaboration behind this work greatly enriches it, and the volume is simultaneously readable for the uninitiated and compelling for the experienced.

RACHEL SCHINE, *University of Chicago*.

WHITE, BENJAMIN L. *Remembering Paul: Ancient and Modern Contests over the Image of the Apostle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. xxi+351 pp. \$71.00 (cloth).

This is an important book. Even if one vigorously disagrees, no serious scholar of Paul can ignore this work. It is not only important—the challenge the work presents is needed. Even though Paul's seven autographs enjoy pride of place in New Testament scholarship, and enjoy a preeminent role in shaping modern theological discourse, their current study is in need of just the challenge this book provides to jar them out of their comfort zone.

As one of the most provocative contemporary histories of Pauline interpretation recalled through a study of social memory, this study, I predict, will provoke a much-needed scholarly debate. While some may decry the thesis of this study as just a lament over the present state of the discipline, and others may rush to heap praise upon it, no serious Pauline scholar can ignore it. Tightly argued and abundantly documented (with 80 pages of notes and 45 pages of bibliography), this work aims to challenge the historical positivism pioneered by F. C. Baur's study of Paul in the nineteenth century, its influence still evident in most contemporary scholarship focused on Paul's letters. Benjamin L. White's aim is to refashion what he caustically dubs the "Pauline captivity narrative" that has largely ignored the influence that Baur's own social location has exerted on that portrait and the important portrait of Paul fabricated by second- and third-century interpreters. Having earned his credentials in this legacy, White has earned the right to be critical. His recognition of the importance of the "sociology of knowledge" and contemporary memory studies for Pauline studies has led him to confess that the "solus" (e.g., sola scriptura) of the past no longer dictate the agenda of his study (xiii). In chapter 6 White locates the Pastorals, Irenaeus, and *3 Corinthians* in a common reception narrative and interpretative stream flowing out of the earlier Pauline wellspring. This continuity inspires White to decry the attempt of most Pauline scholarship to conjure a "real" (and ergo, true) Paul superior to and different from that of the later tradition.

The conclusion to the theme of this careful study is aptly summarized in his detailed treatment of *3 Corinthians*, which White situates in a common reception, interpretation, and memory tributary, and in a valuable comparison with the record of Irenaeus's use of Paul against heresy, which White claims was hardly created *de novo* by the threats posed by "heretics" but shared in a broad stream of Pauline interpretative tradition already in existence (see the discussion and detailed comparison of the Pastorals with Irenaeus, 142–58).

White's six-chapter development hopes to show that both *3 Corinthians* and Irenaeus's *Adversus haereses* paint the same portrait of Paul even though their protocol differed, and both endorse the Paul offered by the "one broad stream of proto-orthodox memory of the Apostle in Asia Minor" in the second century (168). Though that proto-orthodox strategy offers differing views at points, that difference largely comes from tinkering with individual parts of the tradition, White claims, not from substantial disagreement (168). This conclusion opens the door to White's attempt to trace a smooth transition from the undisputed letters of Paul through Luke's Acts to the proto-orthodox portrait. This emphasis on a portrait of Paul endorsed and replicated by that broad stream of proto-orthodox tradition may be the fly in the ointment of White's thesis.

This brilliant, provocative work offers a practical *modus operandi* for future Pauline scholarship in a final chapter on "Practicing Paul" (170–81) and two appendixes highly critical of the sections on the theology and letters of Paul offered at the annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature (183–89) and by major commen-

taries on the Pauline letters (190). Appendix 3 contains an English translation of the Bodmer Papyrus X (*3 Corinthians*, 191–93).

As important as the work is, its primary thesis does arouse questions. The one steady, ever-flowing stream of Pauline tradition it posits is hardly without eddies, dangerous rapids, waterfalls, and conflicts with other merging tributaries. The image of the Paul remembered, one could argue, was fashioned in a crucible of intense and prolonged heated conflict rather than so naturally from a steady, consistent stream of memory. Even the undisputed Pauline letters record intense and bitter disputes between Paul and his gainsayers. The gospel Paul proclaimed did indeed embrace the pagan Gentiles, but as Romans 9–11 shows, that gospel hardly implied the rejection of Israel. White's approach largely obscures the intense conflict between Paul and Peter that a comparison of Paul's Galatians 1 and 2 documents, and Luke's Acts, attempts to paper over. White's fabrication of a Pauline mosaic largely ignores the contradictions embedded in the Pauline narrative between the undisputed Pauline letters and later writings. A close reading of 1 Corinthians 7–13 and Romans 16 will show the important domestic and clerical roles Paul endorsed for women in the apocalyptic age (e.g., prophets, apostles, deacons, etc.). Those roles that flatly reversed or contradicted certain deutero-pauline and proto-orthodox constructions seem to gain-say White's claim of consistency. Moreover, the presumption of a rather organic and unified proto-orthodox ecclesial entity in the second century can be challenged as anachronistic. Stretching beyond Asia Minor to the east in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, we see currents and crosscurrents of Pauline tradition at odds with the more Western portrait of the Paul of memory that White finds in western Asia Minor.

This is hardly to suggest that one Paul is more real than another but simply to assert that there was a great deal more variety in the mosaics of Paul constructed than is here suggested. Nevertheless, I emphatically praise this construction and applaud White's insight, creativity, and genius. His work itself suggests that the cleavages between the Paul exegesis portrays and the Paul of the later tradition are often complementary rather than contradictory.

CALVIN J. ROETZEL, *University of Minnesota, Emeritus.*

WHITMARSH, TIM. *Battling the Gods: Atheism in the Ancient World*. New York: Knopf, 2015. 304 pp. \$27.95 (cloth); \$16.95 (paper).

Tim Whitmarsh's *Battling the Gods* traces the long history of ancient atheism ranging from archaic Greece to early Christianity. It argues that ancient disbelief in the gods inaugurated the atheism of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, challenging the *communis opinio* that atheism, often considered an Enlightenment product, constitutes an anomaly in the history of ideas. Whitmarsh assembles notoriously difficult texts to raise fundamental questions about ancient skepticism that will appeal to students of religion and of pre- and early Christian Europe generally.

Whitmarsh proceeds chronologically, beginning in part 1 ("Archaic Greece") with Homer's representations of the gods, which spawned fiery debates about the divine that could occur "without fear of blasphemy" (39), especially since Greek religion was constrained neither by sacred texts nor by priesthoods. Whitmarsh then examines the materialist theories of the pre-Socratic philosophers, "the most devastating assault on traditional Greek religion" (61). The analysis here is impressive but often strained. In particular, Whitmarsh identifies Hippo as "an atheist in the modern sense" (63) on the basis of two exiguous pieces of evidence. Aristotle, Whitmarsh submits, criticized Hippo as an "excessive materialist" (63), but in the relevant passage Aristotle in fact refrains from discussing him on account of his lack of intelli-

gence. The second testimony is Hippo's epitaph: "This is the grave of Hippo, whom Fate made equal in death to the immortal gods" (64). Whitmarsh chooses the less straightforward reading: the gods are dead like Hippo. Certainly more plausible is the deification of Hippo, which follows the interpretation advanced by Clement of Alexandria, the original source of the epitaph. On the whole, evidence for a coherent atheistic agenda among the early Greek philosophers is sparse and equivocal.

Part 2 ("Classical Athens") analyzes the newfound tendency of orators, the Hippocratics, Thucydides, and Plato, to exclude the divine in explanations of human affairs. The Attic tragedians, for their part, began to question the efficacy of seers, which served "to doubt the god's ability to predetermine the future" (104). Here Whitmarsh examines an intriguing fragment from Euripides's *Bellerophon*, "one of the most explicitly atheistic utterances in all of ancient culture" (109). As Whitmarsh acknowledges, however, the context and speaker of the fragment are uncertain. Whitmarsh's philological argument links the verb *purgousin* in a corrupt line of the fragment to the *Apopyrgizontes logoi* of Diagoras, a purported atheist (though none of his surviving fragments are unqualifiedly atheistic). More problematic, the crucial word in the Diagoras title implying atheism—*Apopyrgizontes* (a *hapax*, no less)—is interpreted by Whitmarsh on the basis of tangential comparanda to mean "Knocking Down Towers" (i.e., the towers of Olympus). This reading of the *Bellerophon* fragment is ingenious but difficult to sustain in the absence of further support.

Part 3 ("The Hellenistic Era") deals with the divine pretensions of Hellenistic rulers who exploited art and cult to propagate their desired transhuman image. From there we move to the major Hellenistic philosophical schools. A revealing case study focuses on the Skeptic Carneades and his pupil Clitomachus, who "may have invented the idea of atheism as a coherent movement with its own deep history" (165). These remarks overreach, seeing that the writings of neither Carneades nor Clitomachus have survived. Later on Whitmarsh modifies the extent of their influence, which is merely "felt" (165) and "reflected" (166) in texts like those of Sextus. Whitmarsh's doxographical reconstruction animates these sparse, albeit tantalizing, fragments and titles, but it remains a desideratum to determine what they can offer analytically for uncovering ancient atheism.

Part 4 ("Rome") discusses the idea of divine providence apropos of the Roman Empire in the writings of Dionysius, Metrodorus, and Plutarch. Whitmarsh here embarks on interesting methodological discussions. He perceives continuity in ancient atheistic thinking sustained by doxography (ancient collections of opinion of philosophers) and "the fantasy of connection to the great classical authors: Diagoras, Protagoras, Critias, even Socrates himself" (207). The notion of doxography as a virtual network of cross-generational writers lending coherence to a set of loosely related ideas over the *longue durée* is instructive. The book ends with the aligning of politics and religion in the early Christian faith, which eclipsed the discourse of atheism: "with no place to occupy on the scale between true religion and false superstition, atheism now became effectively invisible" (238).

The book is expansive in scope and rich in analysis, but three caveats of general relevance might be registered. Evidence for ancient atheistic thinking is articulated through texts with genre-specific conventions. The Skeptics (161–66), for instance, did not harness the concept of atheism independently of their other core philosophical ideas, nor did they set out to reject the existence of the traditional gods per se; their skepticism of the gods reinforced their epistemological stances. By contrast, Lucian (220–27) expressed his views through satire, employing poetic jest to ridicule mainstream religious sensibilities without advocating atheism in the strong form. Thus it seems indispensable to consider how *testimonia* operating on distinctive generic principles can be synthesized into a comprehensive account of atheism.

Second, among whom did atheistic ideas gain traction? That “atheism was an integral part of the cultural life of Greece” (27) or “an alternative to traditional theism” (230) in the Empire seems overstated. Whitmarsh identifies Epicureanism, for instance, as a vehicle for atheistic thought in popular strata, but our knowledge about the organization of Hellenistic philosophical schools and how their ideas permeated the public sphere is frustratingly meager. Furthermore, traditional religion in its numerous modalities persisted despite the proliferation of alternative conceptualizations of the cosmos, a fact that highlights the book’s conspicuous privileging of the textual: does ancient atheistic discourse occur exclusively in philosophy and in the literary, and if so, how did it trickle into the popular imagination? Greek religious discourse did not exist only (or primarily) in text but also materially, visually, and in ritual, thus complicating attempts to derive collective understandings of traditional religion and its alternatives from textual sources alone.

Finally, the term “atheism” is enlisted variably in the book to signify an alternative view of the gods, a rejection of their existence, an assault against them, and elsewhere still, an attempt to rise to the divine. To employ the concept of atheism profitably, one ought to maintain a more precise, even if provisional, definition. Alternatively, if ancient atheism was indeed as capacious as Whitmarsh implies (in contradistinction to the more limited modern usage), then some of the book’s (largely implicit) assumptions about the continuity of atheistic thought may need refining. These observations, however, should not detract from the importance of *Battling the Gods*, which summons complex and often contradictory ancient perspectives about the divine and opens up many avenues into a difficult subject.

KENNETH W. YU, *University of Chicago*.

WRIGHT, STUART A., and PALMER, SUSAN J. *Storming Zion: Government Raids on Religious Communities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. xii+288 pp. \$29.95 (paper).

In *Storming Zion: Government Raids on Religious Communities*, New Religious Movements (NRM) scholars Stuart A. Wright and Susan J. Palmer investigate why raids on nontraditional religious communities, in the United States and several countries worldwide, have increased in frequency and severity over the past three decades. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, they argue, a conspicuous shift occurred in government treatment of new and nontraditional religious movements, to the now-ubiquitous militarized raid. The authors characterize these tactics as an “aggressive overreach by the state,” given that a less confrontational approach would have been more appropriate in all of the book’s six case studies than the type of high-risk response that transpired (5). The case studies primarily come from the United States and include high-profile episodes such as the 1993 raid on the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, and the 2008 raid on the Yearning for Zion compound, but the authors also discuss occurrences in other countries and devote a chapter to raids in France, which they characterize as a particularly salient example of the mechanisms they identify.

In two initial chapters, Wright and Palmer provide data on the worldwide rise in state raids on nontraditional religions and consider and discard possible explanations for the increasing frequency that their data clearly demonstrate. For example, though the sharp rise in raid frequency occurred during the decade before the new millennium, when it is plausible that heightened apocalyptic fervor led to increased NRM activity, frequency did not return to its previous baseline after the turn of the millennium. Instead of locating the reasons for state behavior within

NRMs themselves, Wright and Palmer look to social movement theorists employing a “contentious politics” frame, by which opposition networks engage in “meaning work,” that is, the production of particular framings of a problem that serve to further mobilize opposition (11). “By applying a social movement/contentious politics framework to the analysis,” the authors explain, “we hope to show how new movement organizations and actors emerged through opposition and reaction, defined a perceived threat to the social order, formed coalitions with like-minded actors, and forged alliances with state agents and media to shape the trajectory of contention, culminating in government raids on disfavored and marginal religious communities” (11). As their case studies abundantly illustrate, parties with a stake in destabilizing or extinguishing the group in question—in most cases, apostates from the groups themselves or anticult movement organizations or individuals—framed the group as a threat in order to mobilize and justify a ferocious, militarized response. Their brief history of the growth of the US anticult movement (ACM), and especially the discussion of how the ACM’s central tropes (“cult,” “brainwashing,” “mind control”) were imported by other countries for use in their own campaigns against nontraditional religious groups, shows how opposition networks mobilize. That period of mobilization, they argue, explains the dramatic rise of raids on nontraditional religious communities in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Successful opposition networks produce organized responses by controlling the discourse surrounding the object of opposition. An important contribution of *Storming Zion* is the authors’ identification of a crucial modification to the ACM’s discursive strategy in the early 1980s, signified by a 1984 raid on the Northeast Kingdom Community Church in Vermont, which “marked a shift in the ACM social control enterprise based primarily on *child abuse* accusations . . . [and] signaled the start of a move away from the failed efforts of deprogramming based on ‘brainwashing’ allegations to the more opportunistic and culturally resonant claims of child abuse” (29). The next chapters show how allegations of child abuse allowed ACM actors to marshal extreme responses to groups that had, in many cases, coexisted peacefully with neighbors for years. In most cases, subsequent investigations failed to uncover compelling evidence that child abuse had been taking place.

The authors take pains throughout the book to explain that they do not wish to dismiss any abuses that the groups in question have perpetrated, but as they conclude, child abuse functioned more successfully as a collective action frame than brainwashing had, so that “opponents and state agents were given powerful new tools through the passage of aggressive child protection laws to investigate and exercise control over suspect religious groups” (226). The argument about the ACM’s instrumentalization of cultural anxiety about child abuse threads throughout the book, which concludes with a comparison between state responses to nontraditional religious groups versus state responses to the Catholic Church’s sex abuse scandal. Wright and Palmer contrast governments’ failures to crack down on the Catholic Church’s demonstrated offenses with governments’ use of child abuse allegations to check or destroy suspect religious groups and conclude forcefully that increasing and increasingly militarized raids on nontraditional religious communities constitutes egregious religious discrimination.

In addition to the argument about the child abuse frame, other strengths of *Storming Zion* include detailed reconstructions of how prior events shaped the state response in later raids and how media relied only on disgruntled former members in crafting their accounts. For instance, it is not only a generalized post-Jonestown anxiety about nontraditional religious groups that impels various opposition actors but rather a specific anxiety about the Rajneeshees in Oregon and an instrumentalization of that anxiety that exacerbated concerns about the Nuwaubians in Georgia

and mobilized the responses against them. Stated generally, these are truisms in NRM studies; with Wright and Palmer's detailed and context-specific descriptions, they become vivid illustrations of the mechanisms by which nontraditional religious groups are systematically targeted and curtailed by powerful opposition networks.

While at times the authors' sharp focus on the contentious politics framework obscures other essential aspects of these stories (racial anxiety in the case of the Nuwaubians or concern over intimidation practices in the case of the Church of Scientology, for example), Wright and Palmer make an important argument in this book, and they make it well. *Storming Zion* is cogent and accessible and would work well in undergraduate classrooms, both for the robustness of its analysis and the normative questions that it raises.

KRISTEN TOBEY, *John Carroll University*.

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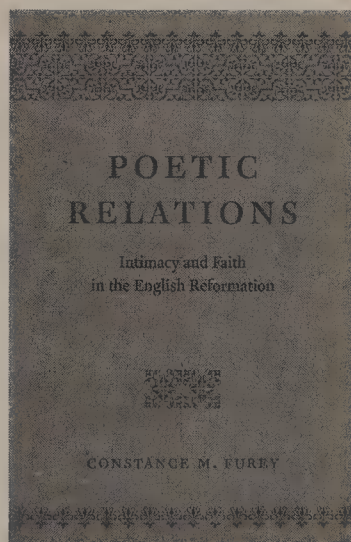
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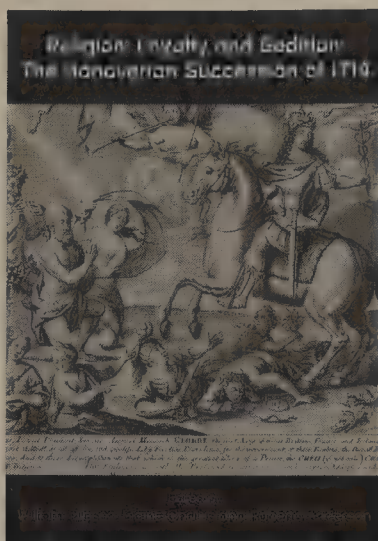
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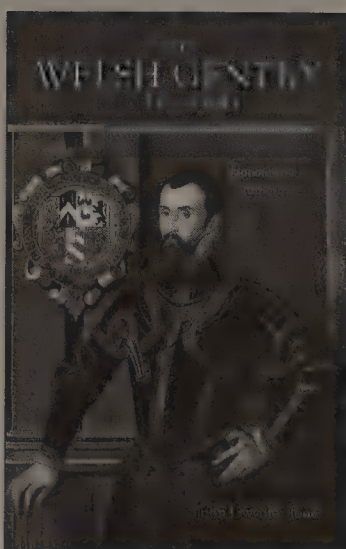
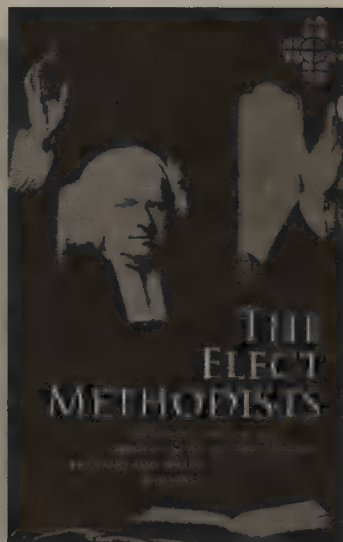
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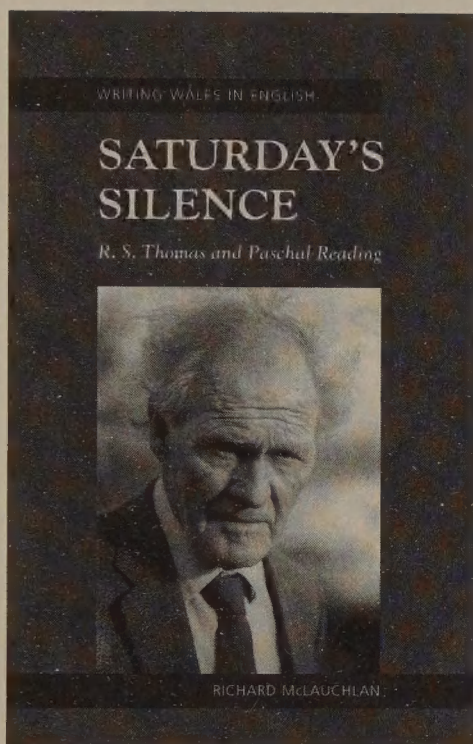
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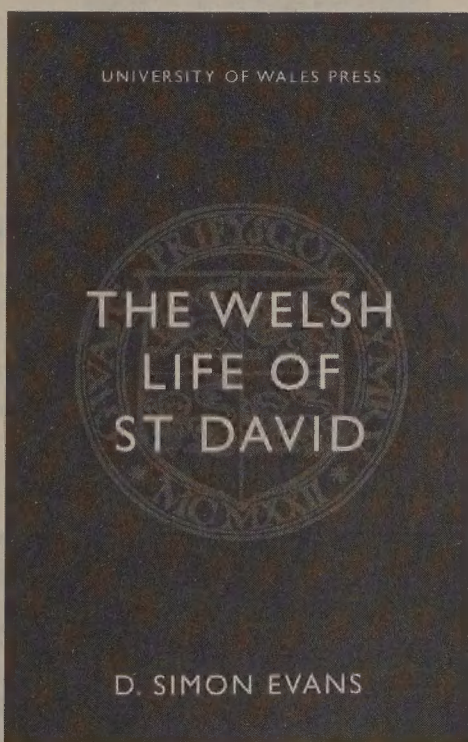
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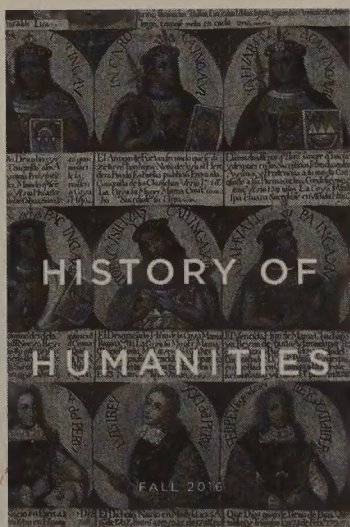
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